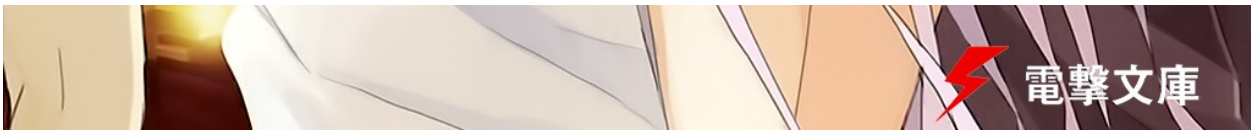
とある魔術の禁書目録
インデックス
10
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ
電撃文庫

# Toaru Majutsu no Index - Volume 10

## << CONTENTS >>


- Illustrations
- Chapter 5: An Intermission on a Thread of Tension. Resumption_of_Hostilities.
- Chapter 6: Resumption of Pursuit with an End. Accidental_Firing.
- Chapter 7: The Foe Who Should Be Beaten, The Person Who Should Be Protected. Parabolic_Antenna.
- Chapter 8: The Reason for the Clenched Right Fist. Light_of_a_Night_Sky.
- Epilogue: The Awaiting People after the Conclusion. Those_Who_Hold_Out_a_Hand.
- Afterword
- Notes
- Credits

とある魔術の禁書目録
インデックス
10
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ




**Toaru Majutsu no Index 10**

This is the "Daihaseisai" that would extend over a period of 7 days.

It is a mega-large scale event that gathers all the students and teachers of Academy City; with people such as the management committee member Fukiyose Seiri, the cheerleading figure of Tsukuyomi Komoe, and Misaka Mikoto of the esteemed school for high-class female students, among others.

Amongst all these, a single ripple extends out.

"Croce di Pietro".

It is an existence that will abruptly destroy all the dreams of everyone important to Kamijou Touma...!

Kamijou Touma runs.

Everyone's waiting for the previous fun of the Daihaseisai to be recovered.

When science and magic cross paths, the story shall begin...!

電撃
か-12-10
とある魔術の禁書目録⑩
鎌池和馬
電撃文庫
630

9784840234283
1920193006308

ISBN4-8402-3428-0
C0193 ¥630E

MediaWorks
Published by MediaWorks
Recommended Retail Price: 630 JPY
*Consumption levy would be added to the price separately

**Kamachi Kazuma**

In this volume, the athletic meet chapter continues. Throughout the process, I've been writing while thinking "What if the atmosphere of Academy City feels somewhat different than usual?", among other things, but I wonder how it would turn out.

(Products of Dengeki Bunko)

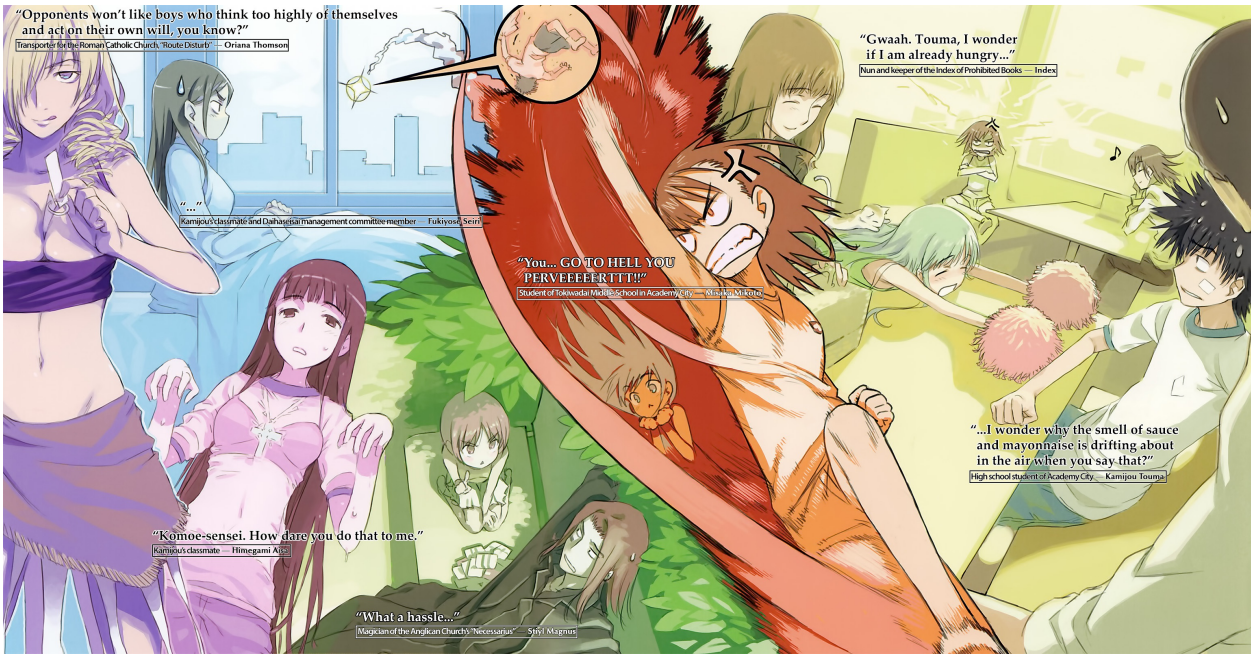
Toaru Majutsu no Index
Toaru Majutsu no Index 2
Toaru Majutsu no Index 3
Toaru Majutsu no Index 4
Toaru Majutsu no Index 5
Toaru Majutsu no Index 6
Toaru Majutsu no Index 7
Toaru Majutsu no Index 8
Toaru Majutsu no Index 9
Toaru Majutsu no Index 10

**Illustrator: Haimura Kiyotaka**

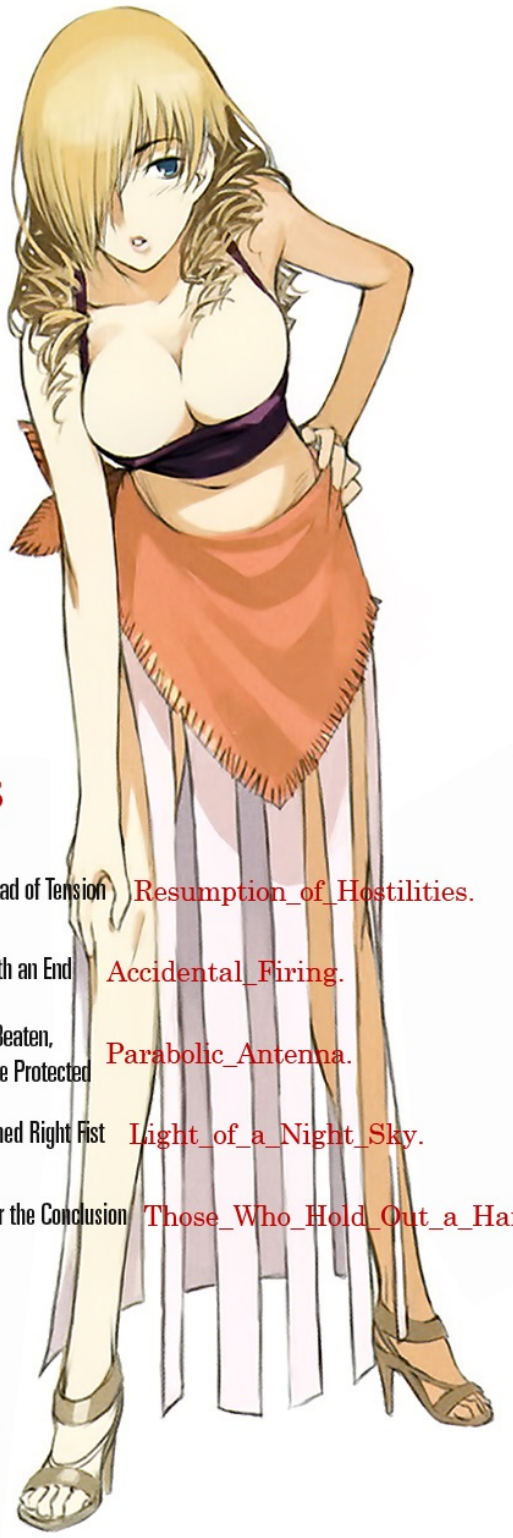
Born in 1973. Still considering between a microwave oven and a HDD recorder, but the appliance in mind to be purchased would be a "Futon Dryer". Would be wishing for a dryer that is able to fold things for use in the balcony next time.

カバー／挿絵紹介

"In the end, let me say 'it is over'. I will guide you all and change the world for the better."
Pious member of the Roman Catholic Church, "Mardi Gras" — Lidvia Lorenzetti


"Opponents won't like boys who think too highly of themselves and act on their own will, you know?"
Transporter for the Roman Catholic Church, 'Route Disturb' — Oriana Thomson
"..."
Kamijou's classmate and Daihasesai management committee member — Tukiyose, Seiri
"Komoe-sensei. How dare you do that to me."
Kamijou's classmate — Himegami Aiho
"What a hassle..."
Magician of the Anglican Church's 'Necessarius' — Stiyl Magnus
"You... GO TO HELL YOU PERVEEEEERTTT!!"
Student of Tokiwadai Middle School in Academy City — Misaka Mikoto
"Gwaah. Touma, I wonder if I am already hungry..."
Nun and keeper of the Index of Prohibited Books — Index
"...I wonder why the smell of sauce and mayonnaise is drifting about in the air when you say that?"
High school student of Academy City — Kamijou Touma

とある魔術の
禁書目録
インデックス
10
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ
[Croce di Pietro]
Also known as the Cross of Pietro. Through one of its few users, from the owner, it holds the key of the heavens which is the pierced cross from St. Peter's grave. It is able to change the location where it was erected on, even an empty space, into the "Promised Land" for the Roman Catholics and control others, physically and mentally. It would make any event occuring on it's soil beneficial to the Roman Catholics, and the inhabitants would not remember any uncomfortable feelings even after the changing. This is a spiritual weapon that has the effect of asserting the feeling of "happiness".



# contents


10 Chapter 5 An Intermission on a Thread of Tension Resumption_of_Hostilities.

78 Chapter 6 Resumption of Pursuit with an End Accidental_Firing.

160 Chapter 7 The Foe Who Should Be Beaten, the Person Who Should Be Protected Parabolic_Antenna.

238 Chapter 8 The Reason for the Clenched Right Fist Light_of_a_Night_Sky.

324 Epilogue The Awaiting People After the Conclusion Those_Who_Hold_Out_a_Hand.


## [Daihaseisai]

This is the overall large-scale event (sports festival) that's held amongst the 2.3 million population of espers amongst all the schools in Academy City.
It lasts for 7 days, from September 19th to September 25th.

# Chapter 5: An Intermission on a Thread of Tension. *Resumption_of_Hostilities.*

## Part 1

“Magicians have invaded Academy City.”

The Anglican priest Stiyl Magnus said.

“Right now, we know that the ‘Route Disturb’ Oriana Thomson and 'Mardi Gras' Lidvia Lorenzetti are involved in this case. They intend to set up a large-scale spiritual item deal in this city nya.”

The magician, Tsuchimikado Motoharu continued.

In Academy City, where it was already noon, high school student Kamijou Touma recalled what they had said. Because of this special sporting event ‘Daihaseisai’ that the whole of Academy City was hosting, there were crowds on the streets.

“Though security is normally rather tight, as Academy City is hosting Daihaseisai, don’t you think that they have to open a window to some degree? They must have exploited this tiny opening in order to get into Academy City.”

“It’s like this, nya. If the Anti-Skill and Judgment members of Academy City catch a magician from the magic side, there will be a problem. But at the same time, we can’t just let in so many magicians just to pursue them. Not all the magicians are friendly towards Academy City nya. Both the science and magic sides have noticed what Oriana and Lidvia are doing, but for various reasons, they can’t take action.”

About 80% of the populace here were students, and today, there were many adults, a rare sight. These adults were parents who were here to see their children actively perform. They were staring at those rotating blades that were generating electricity using wind power, and the automated cleaning robots. Of course, espers like Kamijou were also part of the attraction.

“Thus, the only ones who can take action are us.”

“If we can’t prevent them from dealing this ‘Stab Sword’, we may end up having a war within the magic world nya.”

Kamijou continued to walk among the crowd.

The people around were kids holding helium balloons, walking together with their parents, and the elderly who were holding what looked like foreign Daihaseisai tour guidebooks and confirming the schedules.

“The magical groups who are outside Academy City will move in on the excuse that they feel some magic flow moving through Academy City when it actually happens. They should have set up some sort of searching spell.”

“No spell can involve the entirety of Academy City, so their search should be focused about 1–2 kilometers around Index. The reason is that most of the magic cases happened around her nya.”

“In other words, if that child gets near the centre of this incident, the magic that both Oriana and I release may be detected. On the other hand, once we get the child far away from this incident, the probability of this being detected would be much lower.”

“The one most suited for this job is you, Kami-yan. Besides assisting us in this case, if you can lure Index away from the scene, it’ll be of great help to us.”

The global faction around Kamijou that was peacefully living didn’t sense any abnormalities.

Including what was going to happen in Academy City.

And that there were people who were going to prevent that from happening.

“Peh, the spiritual item that they have isn’t the Stab Sword, but the Croce di Pietro! By setting it at a place, whether it’s physically or mentally, the land would be forced to be that of the Roman Catholic Church. This dominated land would be favorable to the Roman Catholic Church, and everybody will gladly accept that without any hesitation. Imagine what would happen if they’re to use it in Academy City, which is against the religious side…if one says that ‘getting Academy City to be part of the Roman Catholic Church’ is the most beneficial thing, it might actually happen!”

“The ‘deal’ that Oriana and company said isn’t just about the spiritual item itself, it also includes ‘Academy City, where the spiritual item was set up.’ Academy City is the leader of the science world. If somebody controls it, it’s equivalent to gaining the power of half the world. If the Roman Catholic Church, which is the largest side in the religious world, is to obtain Academy City, which is the largest force on the science side — this world would be controlled by the Roman Catholic Church.”

“We’re certain from the start that the delivery involves Oriana and Lidvia, which in retrospect, the target of their deal is unknown. Actually, they never intended to hand the Croce di Pietro to anyone. This is a deal that they are dealing to their own Roman Catholic Church!”

Kamijou Touma was walking in Academy City.

On this busy street, it looked like an intense battle between espers, but in reality, magicians were hiding among them.

## Part 2

Daihaseisai.

It was a 7 day unique sporting event held by Academy City, an esper power development center that occupied the west side of Tokyo, and right now, it was

halfway through the first day. All the events stopped between noon and 2 PM for a lunch break. The large number of students who were either participating in the events or cheering for their classmates were now all on the streets, and together with the tourists from outside Academy City, the population density couldn't be belittled.

"Index?"

Kamijou was walking on the crowded streets.

He had changed clothes before, but right now, he was in an ordinary short-sleeved PE shirt and shorts. For some reason, there were some bruises on his arms and legs, there were even bandages on his face, and there was some dirt and damage to his clothes. But this was Daihaseisai, where espers battled it out, so it was not too eye-catching.

For some reason, even when lunchtime was almost over, he hadn't eaten lunch yet. He moved his famished body, searching for the girl who was extremely likely to be as famished as he was.

(That kid should be around here somewhere…that zero-yen phone that I gave her can't work now because it has no power. Tsuchimikado said not to allow her to get near the scene, so I got to watch over her.)

Kamijou looked around.

He thought: now that the magician Oriana Thomson and the Roman Catholic Lidvia Lorenzetti are actively working in the darkness, how can I be so relaxed?

But Tsuchimikado and Stiyl strictly warned him.

"If the objective of those ladies is to use the Croce di Pietro to dominate Academy City, why can't they do it themselves? Maybe there's a reason why they can't do it at the start? The spiritual item is extremely powerful, so if one wants to activate it and control it to stabilize it, it can't just be chanting something only. For example…yeah, the caster has to spend a long time to purify the Cross with fire and holy oil in order to prevent the Cross from reading any thoughts other than that of the caster, which will cause the command to go haywire. One must set a special enchantment…anyway, if they don't settle these rather complicated conditions, they won't be able to use the Croce di Pietro."

“By knowing the ‘usage conditions,’ we can strike first nya. Anyway, investigating this spiritual item is our job, Kami-yan won’t be able to help.”

They had said so.

Thus, Kamijou’s priority was to accompany a certain girl.

He was look for that girl called Index — a slim green-eyed white girl. She had long silver hair that extended to her waist, and wore a pure white nun's habit that was laced with gold embroidery that looked like a teacup.

As Academy City and Daihaseisai were rather famous, it was not uncommon to see a foreign girl around. Kamijou would occasionally brush into a green-eyed girl, and wouldn’t end up recognizing the wrong person.

…Even so, he still couldn’t find Index.

What was going on? Kamijou tilted his head.

“Touma…”

A cute familiar voice rang inside Kamijou’s ears.

He looked in the direction of where the voice came from, and in front of him, there were just people, people and people. The crowd formed a human wall, and he couldn’t confirm everyone’s face. From the corner of his eyes, he saw something with long silver hair and stared at it. The girl was wearing white pleated skirt and a light green sleeveless vest.

Index couldn’t possibly be wearing that.

“Touma…”

He heard the voice again.

Kamijou looked around, and yet he still couldn’t find that magnificent white nun's habit around. In front of him was a silver-haired green-eyed girl who looked like Index, wearing cheerleader attire, and carrying a calico cat.

“I say, Touma!! Why didn’t you look at me straight in the face just now!?”

“Wa!!”

From who knows when, the cheerleader girl got near to Kamijou, and shouted into his ears, causing him to fall backwards. The other person seemed to be looking for him as well.

He suddenly thought of it.

(Oh yeah, I think Index was changing into cheerleader clothes with help from Komoe-sensei…)

“…Touma, Touma. Are you thinking about something strange? Why do I feel that you’re delighted?”

“Sin…since when? I’m not.”

Kamijou frantically shook his head.

“Come to think of it Index, where is your nun's habit?”

“They’re with Komoe-san.”

Index said unhappily.

Wha…what was she angry about? Kamijou felt insecure. Even if he stared at the calico cat, the cat would only give a bleary-eyed response and yawn. Kamijou saw the serene look on the cat’s face, thought about something for a while, and said,

“Ah, I know. You’re hungry, right, Index? We’ll be meeting with otou-san and okaa-san to have lunch, so just bear with it for a while longer.”

Once he said that, Index’s small fist smashed down onto Kamijou’s head.

“It’s not that, Touma you idiot.”

“It hurts! What’s that for?”

“I wanted to come cheer for Touma, so I changed into this cheerleader attire and asked Komoe-san to teach me the moves! But where did Touma go!? It seemed like you weren’t around during the ‘Bread-eating contest’ and the ‘tug-of-war!’”

Kamijou recalled it.

For some reasons, he had skipped those events and taken some actions that were different from his classmates, but he couldn't explain that to Index.

"Ughh…I…I thought I could be with Touma, so I worked so hard for it. Now that Touma ran somewhere else, what should I do…?"

Index dejectedly muttered.

To her, being in a large-scale event hosted by Academy City that she was so unfamiliar with, it was like someone feeling helpless when he stumbled into the wrong party.

Kamijou inadvertently scratched his head,

"Ah, sorry Index, I…I thought that like usual, that you're just hungry."

"I'm not! I worked so hard just to cheer for Touma, but you didn't even see it at all, that's why I'm so angry! Basically, being panicky when I'm hungry is something that's unrelated to being a humble nun, stupid Touma!!"

"Oh really? You look like you're thinking about food ¾ of a year…wait a sec, I'm wrong!! It's my fault for saying my true thoughts…no, I'm wrong, there's quite a few reasons—!!"

Kamijou tried to justify himself, but Index's anger could not be pacified. She used her small fists to smack onto Kamijou's face and chest. Though it was cute, Kamijou felt that it was a bit strange.

“…? Eh, Index. Why aren’t you biting on me like usual?—IT’S NOT THAT! YOU DON’T HAVE TO FORCE YOURSELF TO DO THAT!!”

Although Kamijou immediately added in the last part, Index unexpectedly didn’t retort back. Not only that, her small fists which were hitting him stopped moving.

Kamijou looked at Index’s face.

He couldn’t help but let out an ‘uuu’ sound.

Index suddenly lowered her head. Not just her face, even her ears were flushed red. Her shoulders were trembling slightly, her small lips seemed to say something, only to suddenly stop. Maybe the calico cat realized something was up as it raised its head and mewed, but Index was so tense that she didn’t hear it.

Index, who was all stiff now, remained silent for a while, and suddenly let out a sentence,

“…Touma’s so perverted.”

“What kind of nonsense are you talking about!? Aren’t you the one who’ll always bite me, Index!? Kamijou-san has been calling you to let go of me all the time, so the one perverted should be you…uhh WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!?”

Just as Kamijou retorted back, the fist that forced him to shut up came over.

The other person was unexpectedly serious.

## Part 3

Oriana received a double-layered ice-cream from a staff member wearing a cute uniform.

Her shaggy, curled blond hair, white skin, blue pupils, tall height, and such a good figure, she completely fulfilled what the Japanese expect of a Westerner.

Right now, she was not wearing the work clothes that she had been wearing a while back. She was wearing a dark-colored mini-top and a light-colored skirt below, with thin sandals to go along with it. Though her skirt extended towards her ankles, there was no sense of purity at all. At every 10cm interval on the skirt, there was a vertical cut downwards. As it couldn't cover her underwear completely, she had to wrap a Sarong skirt for swimsuits around it.

Every step she made, one could see her thighs through the skirt like a curtain. The flesh of her legs continued to fade in and out through the fabric that was supposed to be used for covering the lower body. This sight just basically denied what people normally think about skirts.

In Christian Society, clothes were items that signified one's position and authority, from the Archbishop's holy robes to the uniform of a prisoner. Among that, how badly torn the clothes were—especially when cutting off parts of a woman's skirt—was a sign of her authority being taken away from her. The people who were treated this way were the 'shamed' who were not worthy of being protected, and should be viewed with contempt by society. Of course, those people who were viewed like this were all sinners.

"Sinner."

Oriana licked the creamy ice cream with her bright red tongue.

"A sinner…huh? Hohoho, hohohoho."

"What are you laughing at?"

Another voice was heard.

It was the clear voice of a woman.

There was a thick piece of flashcard stuck on her right ear like a pen clip. The thick piece of paper trembled slightly, letting out a 'voice'.

“It’s alright, nee-chan just wants to say that we’ve finally made it all the way here. Lidvia Lorenzetti.”

“Didn’t I tell you not to call me by my real name? Also, it’s too early to talk about this. Or should I say, this is where things are going to begin.”

“I know, I know, this nee-chan won’t forget her own mission. Even if it’s a ‘sinner’ like me, if I can get some points here, I might be able to hold down those stubborn factions. This way, your position would be much better.”

“…You don’t have to bother about me.”

“Just accept this nee-chan’s good intentions.”

“Compared to me, shouldn’t you be the priority of concern? Are you alright over not resting at all? I think that you should at least—”

“It’s more interesting not to rest. Come to think of it, Lidvia, were you discovered? Though the lead that’s performing on the stage is this nee-chan, and you only need to act as the supporting cast, the whole mission will fail if you can’t move at all.”

“Relax, I’m different from you, I’m resting in a hotel lounge.”

“How elegant, this nee-chan also wants to leisure around inside a hotel. Working out inside a hotel isn’t a bad idea.”

“…Did I not tell you to watch your wretched choice of words?”

“Eh, you’re thinking too much, you know? Modern hotels have swimming pools and gym facilities. Oh my, Lidvia’s so perverted!”

“____”

“Eh? Wait a sec, you’re not saying anything after I made a little joke, Lidvia-chan?”

After saying this, Oriana saw a balloon hanging on a tree in front of her. An ordinary Japanese’s height shouldn’t be able to reach it, but to her, it was easy. She tiptoed slightly, grabbed the string of the balloon, and looked around.

Standing nearby, a young child was staring at her.

Oriana bent down and gave the balloon. The child grabbed the string on the balloon, and without saying a word, ran away.

“…Didn’t I tell you to try not to interact with the people?”

“I did try my best to avoid them, but that situation just now was unavoidable.”

A sigh came from the other end of this communication-type spell.

Oriana didn’t mind as she licked the ice-cream with her tongue.

“Even so…”

She looked at the airship in the blue sky, and said,

“…I know, waiting is something that’s hard to do.”

## Part 4

“Wa, Touma. I seem to be hungry…”

“…You’re saying this, but why do you smell of sauce and mayonnaise, Index?”

Kamijou brought Index to a small, neat coffee shop. Maybe it was the preference of the shop manager, since it was hard to tell which was which, from the menu to the opening/closing sign. Anyway, the atmosphere seemed to be that no one wanted to serve any customers.

However, this shop was full. The reason was simple—it was not 2 PM, so it was still rest time. However, the 2.3 million population of Academy City and the ‘outside’ tourists who exceeded this amount were gunning for the food and drink stores, so just like this, there were a lot of people gathered at this kind of shop.

Kamijou walked into this shop that didn’t have any waiters, shocked by the chaotic state of the shop—

“Oi, Touma! Over here! Here!”

“Ara ara, you don’t have to be so loud.”

There were familiar faces at the four-seater table near the windows. They were Kamijou’s parents, Touya and Shiina. Touya was wearing a shirt with its sleeves rolled up, and slacks, whereas Shiina was wearing a thin sweater and a Western skirt that extended to her ankles. Instead of calling them husband and wife, one could call them a Missy and a chauffeur.

Once Kamijou and Index got to them, Touya spoke up,

“Every year, I’ve been thinking, Daihaseisai is really amazing. It’s already hard enough to get seats, it’s like we’re competing together with the children.”

Daihaseisai was different from ordinary sporting events in that they couldn’t just book a place. The arenas differed for each event, so the parents had to follow the children and book their places multiple times.

It was the same with lunch, as after the events were over, all the competitors and spectators would be out, so if they wanted to get lunch, they had to get their seats.

Kamijou absent-mindedly thought about this.

“Ah, that’s it. It’s like the entire city is raiding the stores.”

“Un, as expected of Academy City. We can’t sit down without squeezing in.”

“Ara ara. Firing a ‘Fried waist and meat sandwich’ into the crowd is rather interesting as well. Let’s try that tomorrow. Ara ara, ojou-chan, come sit here.”

Touya and Shiina emptied their seats. Kamijou sat next to Touya, and Index sat next to Shiina. Shiina smiled at Index, who was so famished that she was lying on the table, as she placed the basket on her lap onto the table.

Though it was a breach of customs to bring bentos into a restaurant, Daihaseisai

wasn’t about ensuring what kind of food people eat, but about people finding a place to eat. Maybe they actually knew about this special condition, or maybe they were just not interested in working, but the store manager at the counter didn’t say anything. Basically, when Index brought in the calico cat just now, he didn’t seem to notice that someone brought an animal in.

(Strange, why would Dad and Mum accept Index without any awkwardness? Ah yes, they’ve met at the seaside resort.)

Kamijou tilted his neck; the other staff members didn’t seem to mind as well. However, if it was this group of people, anybody would accept them.

“Ah look. Today’s lunch is rice sandwich. Ara ara, the shape seems to be off, it’s a bit crushed.”

Shiina said as she opened the basket.

On hearing the food’s name and smelling it, Index and the calico cat immediately gave a quick response, as they forcefully raised their heads.

Kamijou gave a look that said: I can’t stand these two…

Suddenly, he felt that there was something amiss in his vision.

He looked around the store.

The store’s interior had a slightly aged feeling, but it was not like any ordinary chain stores, as the positions of all the wallpaper and chairs were fixed. However, it was not like an old shop where the owner would add in his own personal tastes…so it was somewhat of a suffocating feeling. It felt like a ‘café’ that ordinary people would expect. Basically, it was just a counter that was manned by one person, and the table that Kamijou and the rest were sitting at. The path besides the table was rather narrow, and the guests who were sitting in the adjacent table beside Kamijou were a female college student who was wearing a light gray shirt and thin black pants, and opposite her, was a middle-school student who was wearing a jogging shirt and shorts that a track and field competitor would be wearing. The girl, who was raising her leg, was staring at him — a Level 5 esper, Misaka Mikoto.

Kamijou blinked his eyes, and said,

“Come to think of it though, Wha-what’s with this menu! Would the coffee in this shop be that cheap!?”

“HOLD ON A MINUTE!! WHY DO YOU ALWAYS IGNORE ME? ALSO, DON’T THINK THAT IT AIN’T GOOD QUALITY JUST BECAUSE IT’S CHEAP, IDIOT!!”

Mikoto inadvertently stood up suddenly.

Kamijou looked irritated as he turned his eyes away from the menu,

“Ah…it’s not that, I just so happened not to see you.”

“It…it’s not that! Say…is there anything that’ll happen around you naturally? Who’s this girl, what kind of person is she, and where’s she from?”

Eh? Index, who had been mentioned, looked up.

“You’re asking who she is, she is—”

Kamijou carelessly blurted out, before stopping short. It was somewhat dangerous to reveal in front of his parents that he had a girl living in his dorm.

Just as the pure and innocent Kamijou Touma didn’t know what to do and was racking his brain,

“That’s right, Touma, who’s this girl? She came along during the few days we went to the beach. However, at the seaside resort, you craftily escaped Dad’s question.”

“Eh!?”

Just as Kamijou was about to erupt, Mikoto interrupted,

“THE…THE SEASIDE! AND YOU STA…STASTASTASTASTAYED THERE FOR A FEW DAYS!?”

The piercing scream entered Kamijou’s ears. Seeing Mikoto act like this, the college student opposite of Mikoto sighed.

“No…no I don’t mean it like that, anyway, why must I explain it to you!?”

Just as Kamijou was about to say this—

“That short-hair, where’s she staying? What kind of person is she? Is she Touma’s girlfriend?”

The authentic Westerner Index looks dumbfounded as she said this. She should be referring to an ordinary friend, but the real Japanese Misaka Mikoto’s shoulders started to tremble significantly.

“NO WAY…PEH, JUST SHUT UP!!”

Mikoto started to act violently. In contrast, Index just looked uninterested. She turned the calico cat around with both hands, and looked distracted as she stared at Shiina’s bento that was on the table.

“Touma, Touma. I’m somewhat hungry. Did Touma make any bentos today?”

“Ara ara, today? Then what is it like normally, Touma?”

Seeing Shiina’s slanted smiling face, cold sweat broke out from Kamijou’s back.

“No, no, it’s not that, mother! This girl just so happened to be living close to me, and she can’t cook, so for various reasons, I’m cooking her meals—”

“Eh, that’s not right, Touma. It’s shouldn’t be nearby…”

“Let me explain this, so shut up! As a girl, don’t you feel embarrassed over not being able to cook?”

“But then, I can’t do it means I can’t do it.”

“Damn it, you really intend on eating huh, Index!? Come to think of it, can Mikoto do housework!?”

“Eh? That…that…I’m still learning, so I can still do a bit. I know how to patch up a Persian carpet, and repair some gold plating, though I’m not really good at them.”

“Mikoto…there’s no Persian carpet or gold plating needed in an ordinary Japanese family. That’s not housework, that’s art and crafts, right?”

The female college student explained tactfully, and Mikoto exclaimed,

“Ugh!? That…that’s because the Home Economics module of Tokiwadai Middle School is really…”

Seemed like in the land of the ojous, reviving an antique was like a simple assignment of patching up a shirt.

Anyway, at least he had skillfully changed the topic. Just as Kamijou was feeling relieved, his father Touya stared at the clock on the wall, and said,

“Okay, let’s eat. Touma, say thanks to those two ladies. They haven’t eaten because they were waiting for you.”

Oh really? Kamijou turned around. Mikoto gave a ‘ugh’ sound as she shyly sunk her body into the back of the chair. The college student sitting opposite Mikoto who Kamijou had never met before smiled and said,

“Okay then, the people we’re waiting for have arrived, so let’s eat. Hm, your name is Kamijou Touma, right?”

“Eh? That’s right. Then, you’re Misaka’s sister?”

“Nope. My name is Misaka Misuzu, Mikoto’s mother. A pleasure to meet you.”

……Mother?

Everyone at Kamijou’s table stopped what they were doing.

“Mother!?”

Everyone shouted out in unison, especially Touya, who was extremely embarrassed.

“But…but didn’t you mention college just now?”

“That’s right, because I thought of studying again recently. It’s rather exciting when there’s so many things that I don’t know about even at this age.”

Really unbelievable. Now that she mentioned it, it did make sense. Also, when both father and son turned around to look at the petite Missy Shiina—

“…Well, I guess it’s not strange for this kind of thing to happen in this world? How about you, Touma?”

“Well, now that you mention is, our family’s the same as well, so I guess there’s no need to be surprised about it…right?”

“It’s already strange! Touma is surrounded by adults like ‘Komoe’ and ‘Shiina’ who’re so young it’s too unnatural!! What’s with this youthful sense in this world? Don’t tell me it’s a theme park where Peter Pan is the tour guide?”

Index tried hard to retort, but her body could be considered rather small. In this context, the words of this cheerleader girl in front of him weren’t really convincing.

However, this was nothing to the Misaka family, as Misuzu and Mikoto didn’t mind at all. Mikoto reached out to grab the menu on the table corner,

“Let’s see, it’s a bit late now—Mom, what did you order?”

“Nothing. You see, I’ve prepared bentos as well. So, Mikoto, ain’t I acting more like a mother now?”

“…It’s not ‘more like a mother,’ it’s if you don’t play the role of a mother well, it’ll be nerve-wrecking for me! What’s inside that bag?”

“Hehehe, don’t be surprised when you see it.”

Misuzu rummaged through the bag, and pulled out a large piece of cheese that was as big as a Christmas Cake, some white wine, a silver brass circular pot, and a mini gas stove.

“Ta-da!! Today’s menu is cheese fondue!!”

“You can’t bring things like propane into Academy City!”

POW!! Mikoto smashed onto Misuzu’s head. Luckily, she was not using electricity. In comparison, Misuzu was like a mature woman who could control her tears, as she purposely made her eyes watery.

“Wa, to be hit by my own daughter. However, if a girl’s appetite is large enough

to eat an entire pot full of food, it'll be better for your development. Though exercising is important, you won't grow much if you're only eating such a small bento. Also, your nutrition won't be enough to develop certain areas that you wish to develop. Really, why do you think that I prepared so many dairy products? Aren't they for my daughter?"

"What, wait…what grow, develop? Why are you talking about this all of a sudden!?"

"Did I? What are you talking about? I'm talking about developing healthy bones, so you need to take in enough calcium…don't tell me that Mikoto is thinking of growing a specific area? Why are you wishing for that part to grow?"

"Shu…shut up, stupid Mom! Oi, stop staring at me like that!!"

After shouting like that at Misuzu, Mikoto, who was flushed red now, glared at Kamijou for some reason, not turning away. Misuzu opened her mouth slightly, revealed a not so temperament smile, and said,

"No matter whether dairy products are important, it's common knowledge in biology that you grow more when you eat more. Whether you're growing vertically or horizontally is another matter. Some people get obese by eating because they're too lazy to manage their own bodies. By controlling the calorie intake and amount of exercise, one can grow places that they want to grow. Isn't the food culture of the Western world great? They can eat an entire vat of rice, and yet they're able to develop their physique better than Japanese. Life would be rather beneficial if your breasts are large."

Misuzu said this as she 'ungh' raised both hands and stretched herself lazily. She bent her back like a bow, purposely emphasizing her rather huge assets. Mikoto, whose breasts were still developing, cowardly retreated, and said,

"I…I don't care about it. Saying what eating a lot means that the body will grow bigger, it's just a superstition — Say, WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ANOTHER PERSON'S MOTHER!!?"

Kamijou, who was singled out by Mikoto, turned around at the speed of sound. But when he forcefully turned around, the cheerleader girl Index was in front of him, looking rather unhappy. Maybe it was because of her empty stomach or the issue on breasts.

“…What now, Touma? Why are you staring at other people?”

“No reason.”

Kamijou bitterly smiled,

“Eating a lot can help a person grow, huh? It’ll be good if that’s true.”

“!!”

Hearing Kamijou’s words, Index instantly responded. She opened her mouth wide, ready to bite onto Kamijou’s head, but stopped halfway through. Looked like she was mindful of touching others with her mouth. Her face was flushed red as she slowly returned to her seat, and shrunk up.

(Hm. This is rather awkward…)

Kamijou thought, though it hurt when he was bitten, he didn’t feel comfortable when he was not bitten. What was with this feeling?

At this moment, from his surroundings,

“To…Touma. Don’t tell me you did something to that girl? Just now, you talked about playing a penalty game and letting that girl obey your orders, and now this!?”

“Ara ara. A girl is angry now, and yet we’re able to change the topic like this, this mum seems to have seen that somewhere before.”

“…That’s…that’s right. There’s something suspicious about you two. Humph, I was right.”

“Wa! Our Mikoto is already so mindful about this, and yet she pretended to not be interested in this, so adorable. Truly an unfortunate girl who hasn’t realized her own feelings.”

“…Touma is…a big idiot.”

(Ugh! SUCH MISFORTUNE!)

Hearing the ruckus around him, Kamijou inadvertently wrapped his hands

around his head.

## Part 5

“How troublesome.”

The magician Stiyl Magnus placed the cell phone next to his ear.

He was sitting on a bench in a park, and there was no one beside him. There was canned tea and a sandwich that he bought from a convenience store beside him. After drinking some red tea, he swore deep inside not to drink it a second time. No matter what though, he was a citizen of England, the land of red tea.

However, the reason why he looked so bitter was not because of this.

The reason was the lively voice coming over from the other end of the phone.

“We have checked the records of the British Library. The Croce di Pietro is a spiritual item that the Roman Catholic Church refused to reveal up till now, so even with these details that are open for public access, we can’t guarantee that it’s accurate.”

The owner of this voice that either sounded like a male or a female was Sherry Cromwell. The decoder of the Anglican Church, and at the same time, Index’s enemy. They were both from the same group, and may cross swords because she was of a different faction, but if it was a situation or problem that involved England, she’d help without any hesitation. Sherry was in such a complicated situation.

Because of the attacks she carried out on September 1st, she was now under a religious trial held by ‘Necessarius. As a key combatant, shutting her in and letting her do document arrangements to reflect on her actions had a rather deep meaning. However, Stiyl suspected that Archbishop Laura Stuart would issue a ‘generous disposition.’ Because this incident involved some complicated

background in England, and they couldn’t just easily give up on Sherry Cromwell’s decoding and combat capabilities. That incident had caused quite a few causalities in Academy City, so Laura should have conducted some tense negotiations with the leader of the science side, Aleister, in order to settle it.

To Stiyl, he didn’t even care about this. Just the fact that Sherry had once attacked Index made him want to attack her with a flame sword before talking to her.

“Speaking of the Croce di Pietro, as a former Roman Catholic, I have never seen it before. So this can be classified as a secret weapon. It’ll take some time for us to find its weaknesses.”

The other person who was speaking in a relaxed tone was Orsola Aquinas. Like Sherry, she specialized in decoding anything magic-related. Because of the incident when she tried to decode the grimoire The Book of the Law, she had switched from a Roman Catholic to an Anglican.

Right now, Stiyl was getting information from the huge number of records sleeping inside the British Library, which was independent of the British Museum, as he tried to find the conditions for the Croce di Pietro to be used. Based on specialties, they should let those familiar with codes to manage the collections of information on these antiques. Thus, Sherry and Orsola were in the same department.

“Duru duru…oh my, wait a sec, Sherry! Sherry! There’s handwritten information regarding the Vatican security on this page.”

“YOU! Didn’t I tell you so many times not to eat muffins in the library?”

“But it’s already this time now. Want a light snack?”

“IT’S NOT ABOUT WHETHER I WANT IT OR NOT! I SAID NO EATING ALREADY, SO STOP CHEWING ON THAT MUFFIN!!”

“But this is the muffin that my Amakusa friends specially made for me. It includes food rituals that heals my wounds and replenishes my energy. My body hasn’t recovered yet, you know.”

“Ch, stop changing the topic—idiot! Don’t tell me that that dropping food scraps

on the floor is also another important part of the Amakusa—”

Stiyl inadvertently sighed.

No matter what, the personalities of these two people were completely different. After some crackling sounds were heard, the phone on the other side was dead.

(Really…)

Stiyl folded up his cell phone and slipped it into his pocket.

(…Since when did Necessarius become so harmonious?)

Up till now, the atmosphere in Necessarius was like walking on a spider web. On the other side of hope, was despair. In order to add a comrade, they had to kill another. They had to shed blood in order to prevent shedding of blood — it was such an organization.

The only reason he could think of was of a certain boy.

Many magicians had interacted with him, were affected, and reconsidered what their purpose in life was.

Even Stiyl himself was one of them.

“…Though I don’t want to admit it.”

After saying this, Stiyl tossed the shortened cigarette stick next to his feet. The moment it touched the ground, the cigarette vanished into a puff of fireworks. He held onto a new one, and without touching it with his hand, a flame appeared on the tip. He puffed out some smoke.

(Tsuchimikado said that he’s going to check on the security of Academy City, he feels that it’s not so reliable over there. Then…)

Stiyl leaned onto the bench, looked up at the somewhat disgustingly blue sky, and puffed out some smoke like a chimney.

“?”

Someone was staring over.

From the top, he tilted his head down. In front of him was a female that was 135cm tall.

Her name was Tsukuyomi Komoe, right?

Near the end of July, when the girl named Index had first snuck into Academy City, she was the one who had hid Index in her apartment. She looked like she was around 12 years old, but it was said that she was a teacher. For some reason, she was wearing a pale green sleeveless shirt and a white pleated skirt — seemed like a cheerleading attire.

She was staring at Stiyl's face.

(Oh. Such a relaxed country, and yet there are people who can manage a crisis.)

Tsukuyomi Komoe probably hadn't been involved with the core of this situation, but because of what happened the last time, she could still sense that something was strange with Stiyl Magnus.

Stiyl revealed a cynical smile.

"Sorry, can I help you?"

Stiyl said as he shook the cigarette in his mouth. It had been a long time since he last felt that sense of fear and rejection that reminded him of the atmosphere in Necessarius.

Komoe-sensei pointed her index finger at Stiyl, and said,

"Hey! It's forbidden for anyone to smoke on the roads of Academy City!!"

…An answer that was completely expected.

Stiyl speechlessly blinked,

"Sigh…"

"Wh…why are you giving such a tired expression!? This Komoe-sensei is seriously warning you! I'm seriously preaching to you, you know!"

Seeing Komoe-sensei, whose eyes were watery now, Stiyl slightly frowned.

Komoe-sensei didn’t care about the look on his face, as she looked at his face closely before saying,

“Humph! Pardon me, how old are you? Komoe-sensei feels that you’re underage.”

“So what?”

“Of course I’m scolding you! Ah really, listen to me. LOOK AT ME! DON’T TURN YOUR HEAD AWAY!!”

Komoe-sensei was angry as she snatched the cigarette from Stiyl’s mouth, and reached into his coat without any hesitation. She rummaged through the coat, and pulled out a cigarette pack.

“…”

Stiyl looked like he got some spasms on his face. Basically, he wouldn’t attack anyone that was unrelated to magic (except for a certain boy who had a special right hand.)

Komoe-sensei looked at the brand of the cigarette pack that she confiscated, raised her eyebrows, and said,

“And yet you chose such a brand to show off. Did you learn to smoke because you yearned to be a movie star or something!?”

“It’s just that in my country, that’s the most famous brand…”

“Really! Anyway, I’m confiscating this! You’re not allowed to smoke. Nicotine and tar will affect a child’s growth!!”

Looking at Komoe-sensei, who was staring back at him, Stiyl inadvertently looked away.

(…So troublesome.)

He thought.

Tsukuyomi Komoe was similar to a certain girl.

They didn’t mind about the difference in physiques, ignored the distance between people, and get into other people’s hearts.

They did things that most people wouldn’t pay much attention to, but they were doing it for the good of others.

They’d keep scolding others to prevent others from getting hurt.

—Several years back, every time Stiyl smoked, the girl would angrily scold him.

“Really…”

“Wha…what’s with that helpless expression!? I, Ko–Komoe-sensei, am really angry now! Ah, there’s still more? Today, sensei’s going to confiscate them all—wa…wa! Stop playing with the cigarette pack like you’re playing with a ball; hurry up and hand it over to me!!”

Stiyl turned to look away from Komoe-sensei. Even as he was not paying attention to the shouting Komoe-sensei, he didn’t intend to leave.

That was right, she was really stubborn.

## Part 6

Lidvia Lorenzetti was at a lounge in a hotel.

She was wearing an old, torn and faded monastic robe, and under the backdrop of this modern surrounding landscape, it was rather eye-catching. Her hair and skin were as damaged and dull as her robe. From her look, she should be a beauty, but from head to toe, she was like an old movie, her entire color was gone.

The robe that she was wearing was a generation older than those worn by the

Roman Catholics, and it had the unique characteristic of having different variations. Among them, the robes Lidvia was wearing were white, with a red cross on it. It was the symbol of St. George, and also the symbol of the Anglican Church. During modern times, she had been mistaken for an Anglican many times just because she was wearing a robe that had a symbol similar to that of the Anglicans. But Lidvia chose this dress-up not only because it was handed down from her grandmother, but also because of her belief. She believed that ‘even if they were sinners, as long as they had some sort of talent, she’d extend her hand to them.’

In terms of world ranking, the hotel where she was at now wasn’t exactly a famous hotel. In terms of history, one could only describe it as ‘shallow.’ It couldn’t be compared to those large hotels in Italy that had an antique value… but the prosperity of this hotel was much superior to all the other hotels in the world.

Maybe this was the effect of an international sporting event like Daihaseisai, Lidvia wildly guessed.

Academy City, which was normally sealed up, didn’t really need a hotel except if they wanted to host VIPs from other schools. Thus, facing such a large-scale event, tourists from outside would gathered at the few hotels that Academy City had. All the guestrooms were fully booked. With so many tourists, business must also be bustling for hotels outside Academy City.

The surrounding crowd started to move about quickly, as Lidvia slowly moved forward.

This gave the feeling of a distortion that excluded both time and space.

(Then.)

Lidvia Lorenzetti left the hotel through the rotating glass door.

The bright sunlight of the hot day beat down on her.

She squinted her eyes.

(Oriana’s working hard now, so I should get to work now.)

As Lidvia thought this, a broadcast about Daihaseisai could be heard. She looked up, and saw an airship floating up there. The big screen on the bottom of the airship was airing the weather report. The report said that there was going to be clear weather. The weather was good alright, thought Lidvia as she looked away from the light shining down on her.

The entire street looked peaceful.

Lidvia Lorenzetti passed through the gap in the crowd, and vanished among them.

## Part 7

2:20 PM.

Lunchtime was over.

There was still some time till the next event that Kamijou would be participating in. However, they had to book their seats beforehand, so the group of parents, Kamijou Touya, Shiina and Misaka Misuzu quickly headed to the next arena.

Thus right now, the three people walking on the road in front of the bus stop were Kamijou, Index and Mikoto. As Mikoto was from a different school, she had to meet up with her own schoolmates.

(Hm, anyway, let's…)

Kamijou was hiding behind the two girls, as he heaved a sigh of relief deep inside.

They seemed not to notice the events that were happening in Academy City. To Kamijou, as Fukiyose Seiri had gotten involved just now, he didn't wish to involve anyone else, even if Index and Mikoto were the perfect fighting strength

that he needed.

Mikoto didn’t seem to notice that there was something strange with Kamijou.

“…I’ve been feeling strange about this, why are both of you always together?”

Seeing Mikoto look at Kamijou and Index’s surprised expression, Kamijou was shocked.

Actually, Kamijou didn’t know it himself.

Because he had lost his memory. Before he knew it, and that was when he was conscious, Index had been living with him. And he had been hiding the fact that he lost his memory.

Thus, Kamijou thought that he could just ‘give a vague answer and leave it for others to interpret it,’ or ‘try to change the topic’ and slip by.

“Then why is short-hair always with Touma?”

Index asked this question faster than Kamijou could say anything.

“What?”

Mikoto flinched slightly at Index's counter-question and said,

“What do you mean 'always'? There's no way I spend 24/7 with this thing! That's balderdash. Even I am not crazy enough to squander my leisure time for this idiot.”

“…Wa, to think you’d give me a double attack of ‘this thing’ and ‘idiot.’”

Kamijou lifelessly said, but the two girls didn’t bother.

“Hn—”

Index pondered for a while.

“Now that you mention it, that would be the case for me as well.”

“WHAT? IS THAT SO???”

“Hn. Touma will abandon me the moment something happens. If it’s a case of life and death, he’ll stubbornly run to the front like an idiot…I guess it has something to do with short-hair, right?”

“I…I don’t know.”

It was true that Mikoto was involved in several of the cases, but not to the ‘all the time’ extent.

If so, what was going on? As Index and Mikoto were thinking about this, they both turned towards Kamijou at the same time.

“…Touma always ends up in the hospital after making a promise. What’s going on behind the scenes?”

“…You, you do this sort of thing every time? Speaking of which, you did help those children and Kuroko the last time…”

Kamijou, who was feeling cowardly, inadvertently retreated back.

In a certain sense, what they were saying was true. But thinking about what was happening in Academy City now, he couldn’t just simply answer them.

Thus,

“You…you’re both really irritating! It’s just that, you’re just seeing this part of the year where I’m enjoying life the most! It’s not a feeling that lasts for a whole year. About that…guess humans have to do two or three cool things in a year!!”

He shouted out, but got cold responses,

“…Is it really two times?”

“I don’t think there were only three times.”

After that, Kamijou got scolded badly by the two of them. The two girls seemed to feel much better after venting their doubts on Kamijou, and they continued with their normal walking pace.

“The next match is going to start…ah, in the end, I’m still unable to get a good

rest. And my body cooled down too much thanks to the air-conditioning, though it's good that my muscles aren't stiff."

"…You're really up for this. What now, don't tell me there's a showdown between two ojou schools."

"…"

Mikoto suddenly stopped her stretching exercise.

"You…don't tell me you forgot about that penalty game."

"What? You said that the loser would be the one whose school has the lower position, and will have to listen to what the winner says. No problem, no problem. Have you seen the points table? Our school isn't far away from Tokiwadai."

"To…to think that you're still so relaxed! Humph! Our school is the most famous for coming back from behind in the second half. So you…your attitude will be quickly…HEY! WHY ARE YOU WALKING AWAY WITHOUT CARING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING!?"

Mikoto continued to fire electric shots at Kamijou, and though the distance was close, his right hand managed to reduce them to nothing.

He himself wanted to shout out, "IT'S SO SCARY! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN!?" and tremble in fear, but after getting hit directly by one of the only seven Level 5 espers in Academy City, he was still unscathed. The pride of the esper was trampled, as even when Mikoto continued to exclaim "WHY DON'T THEY HIT!!" she was ignored, and ran away at an exceptionally fast speed. Seeing this, Kamijou was worried that her warm up wasn't enough.

Index, who had been holding onto the calico cat up till now, said,

"…listen to what the winner says?"

"It's not that. Even though we said that we'll listen to what the winner says, there's still a limit, Index! It's definitely not that kind of perverted development that you're thinking of, so please relax!!"

“Wa! I’m not thinking about that!!”

Index opened her mouth, but froze halfway through. Index didn’t know whether to leap onto him or not, as she could only open her small mouth wide.

Kamijou trembled as he thought,

(Cheh!! Though it’s irritating to get bitten, it’s awkward for her to have such awareness! It’s unbearable to be in kind of attention where nothing is happening. How can I break this deadlock!?)

Taking this opportunity to remove her bad habit of biting others was a way, but if things weren’t successful, it wouldn’t be good for this awkward situation to continue. Why do I feel like I’m having some dilemma, like I’m confessing to my childhood friend!?

Kamijou was perplexed.

On the other hand, Index’s body was stiff now, as she was probably looking to avoid the topic of biting others as she said,

“To…Touma, I’m a bit thirsty, I want some fruit juice over there.”

“…Such an unnatural way to change topics.”

“That’s not important! I said I’m thirsty now! And I want to drink!!”

Index tugged onto Kamijou’s hand as she said this. Kamijou thought that since biting was a no-go, grabbing others on the hand was okay? Right now, Kamijou was unable to understand what she was thinking.

“That…wait a sec, Index, didn’t you just finish lunch? If you’re going to continue eating like this, you’re going to grow fat.”

“Wha…”

Index, who was wearing a cheerleader attire, let the calico cat in her arms drop onto the ground. The kitty landed on the ground with agility, and jumped back into her arms.

Index was flushed red so badly that she was about to emit steam out of her head.

“No…no way will I grow fat! I definitely eat more than an ordinary person by a little bit, but against your predictions, I haven’t grown fat at all!!”

“Real—ly? Have you measured your weight, body fat and waist circumference before? Maybe you haven’t noticed it before, but there’s quite a few layers added onto your defense.”

Kamijou stared at the area around Index’s stomach.

Compared to her nun's habit, the thin cheerleader uniform pressed down on Index, revealing all the curves of her body. Because she was wearing a sleeveless vest, even her navel was exposed.

“If…if you don’t believe it, you can measure my stomach! I’m prepared anytime!”

“I’m not mentally prepared yet! Also, who would bring a measuring tape along with him all the time, Index!!”

“You don’t need it! Touma just needs to wrap his arms around my waist to tell!!”

“WHAT!!??”

Kamijou widened his eyes.

“Hurry! You better try it quickly!!”

The girl’s thin hand forcefully grabbed the boy’s stiff wrist.

(Damn it…I forgot to convey the message. Seems like I was too agitated just now.)

Mikoto, who had separated from Kamijou, ran along the path she just took.

On the Daihaseisai tour guidebooks that Academy City released, the schedules for all the events were written, but those were the ‘pre-arranged’ ones, as there would be changes on the actual day.

The time for the ‘Bread-eating contest’ that Tokiwadai Middle School was participating in had been changed before lunch. If she didn’t inform her mom, Misuzu, she might be waiting at an arena where she was not involved in the competition.

Mikoto left her cell phone in her bag that was with the bag storage group of her ‘student dormitory,’ and there was no public phone nearby. Thus, she was running around the streets just to pass off a few words.

Suddenly, someone was running alongside Mikoto, who was running in a graceful manner.

On an adjustable competitive wheelchair, covered in bandages, was a girl, Shirai Kuroko. Because she was an injured person, and also a spectator, she was wearing a short-sleeved shirt, a thin white rice-colored sweater and a gray pleated skirt, the summer uniform of Tokiwadai Middle School. Her twin butterfly-knotted ponytails were floating behind in the wind.

“Onee—sama, if you’re in a rush, do you me to use my Teleport?’”

“…Before I even answer that question, you’ll be hugging me without any hesitation, so I’m prepared.”

“Heh! As expected of onee-sama, to be able to read my thoughts! I even wanted to add on that I haven’t had enough of onee-sama during these few days when I was in the hospital!!”

Mikoto suddenly felt a chill down her spine, and kept a distance from Shirai. Shirai, who was smiling, said as if she suddenly realized something,

“But where is onee-sama rushing off to…? Don…don’t tell me! You’re going to run back to that corrupted apeman and go cheer for him!?”

“No…no way, idiot! I’m now enemies with that guy.”

“Oh really? But that mister seems to be in front of you.”

Ah? She’s already back there? Mikoto inadvertently looked away from Shirai, who was beside her, to the front.

In front of her was…

A certain boy who was with the silver-haired green-eyed girl.

He was kneeling down, wrapping the cheerleader girl's waist with his two hands, and bringing his face to her tummy.

What…!?

Mikoto was so shocked that she couldn't say anything.

Though it was Daihaseisai, there was no one else on the road besides them. Thus, that guy was taking this opportunity to hug this girl's waist that was thinner than himself by one or two rounds. It was already perverted for a boy and girl to hug each other while facing each other, and what was the reason for him to of specially brought his face close to her?

This made Mikoto speechless.

At this moment, Shirai, who was beside Mikoto and was on the sports-type wheelchair, cried out with an exaggerated tone that was definitely acting,

"Wa, does this feel likes she's a few months pregnant? Or is it she can feel the baby kicking in her tummy…huh? (sniggers)"

Hearing such an exaggerated voice, Mikoto's body started to tremble. Thunder roared as blue and white sparks were emitted from her body. Even if she released a lightning strike, it'd be ineffective against that boy.

It seemed that even the railgun wouldn't hurt him.

But, Mikoto still clenched her right fist tightly.

"GO…TO HELL!!!!!!!! YOU PERVERTED MONSTER——!!!!!!!!"

She suddenly arrived beside the boy, raised her fist, and beat down with all her strength.

"WOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!????"

Kamijou, who was suddenly hit by a flying punch, left Index as he rolled on the ground. He felt pain from the back of his head, which hit the ground, and his limbs, which rubbed against the ground.

His face felt the amazingly soft feeling of the girl's belly, the small amount of sweat, the sweet smell, and the warmth. As Kamijou was rendered giddy by all these factors, he was now awake since Mikoto punched him. Also, at least he was able to physically separate himself from Index. Kamijou thought that it was killing two birds with one stone, but why wasn't he happy?

"Eh?…I hit him?"

However, Mikoto, who got a hit in, exclaimed loudly.

Kamijou lay on the ground, trembling as he said,

"Uuu…ugh…no, this is good. I'm definitely unable to escape that mysterious pink atmosphere that surrounds Index and me by myself. But, no, however… why can't the world use a gentler way of solving this!!"

Kamijou was almost crying as he rubbed his eyes. But, it was not the hands that he was so used to touching, it felt like a thin piece of cloth. A smooth fabric, maybe satin, what was this? Examining it carefully, it was a white piece of cloth. It was like those paper fans that were used to beat people in a boke and tsukkomi routine on television that were folded in several layers.

It was a pleated skirt.

Index's cheerleading uniform.

"……"

The vertical zipper on the side of the skirt was ripped, and now it was a rectangular piece of cloth. As he was wrapping his arms around Index's waist, he seemed to have grabbed onto the skirt. When he had been hit in that state, he had pulled it along.

(Then…)

Kamijou timidly looked away from his hands to the front.

In front of him was Index, whose face was now completely red. She was still wearing the cheerleading uniform, but what remained of it was only the pale green sleeveless vest. The skirt that should be there was now gone, for it was in Kamijou's hands.

Forget about her navel, the underwear and thighs of the silver-haired green-eyed girl could be seen completely. No, strictly speaking, she was wearing a tennis underwear-shaped pants type apparel. Maybe it was just his imagination, but the creases on the underwear-shaped apparel was showing on several parts, but of course, there were some places where he couldn't look (Though Kamijou still explained them in detail).

"!!"

With the two hands that were holding the calico cat, Index hastily covered her lower abdomen, but of course, she couldn't cover it completely. Now flushed red, Index tried her hardest to look away from Kamijou's gaze, but the attitude seemed to be a bit too sensational.

Looking at the scene in front of him, and the smooth skirt in his hands, Kamijou thought,

(—I'm dead. In five seconds, my skull cap will be crushed to bits by Index's front teeth…no, even her canine molars are itching to bite me! …Hey, wait a sec. Right now, Index seems to be mindful about biting others! So maybe there's a chance to escape!?)

In desperation, Kamijou was looking for hope, and just as he was about to run away,

"…Hold on, you bastard."

"…Long time no see, mister."

The cold voices of Misaka Mikoto and Shirai Kuroko were heard.

"…"

As Kamijou cowardly looked at them, the girl that was emitting blue and white sparks pulled out some arcade game coins from the pockets of her shorts, while

the girl on the wheelchair brazenly flipped her skirt and pulled out terrifying metal spikes from her thighs.

“Hmph, though I have no need to help that girl.”

“But onee-sama's enemy is my enemy.”

Though their tones didn’t seem to be energetic, the voltage of those two seemed to have reached the highest. Index, the only one who could save him, was now hiding behind Mikoto, her face all red.

(My…my life’s at its end.)

Now tired and weary, Kamijou placed his hand on his forehead, as he finally said, like he was not giving up,

“But, in this situation, the most important thing is to stop this useless war. How about everyone work together to solve the problem about Index’s skirt? Can we use a peaceful method of settling this? I guess not, huh? I’m sorry…”

Kamijou, who originally intended to justify his actions, could not maintain it.

At the same time, the two girls seemed to treat this as his final words, and jumped on him.

## Part 8

Kamijou was nearly beaten into a pulp by the railguns and metal spikes, and because he was tired over running around for that long, he was now panting as he rested on a bench. Index was taken by Mikoto and Shirai to replace her skirt (or so it seemed, as while he was running away, he seemed to hear those words from Mikoto). Looked like he had to do something else now.

(This…)

The display on his watch read 3 PM.

There was no contact from Tsuchimikado Motoharu or Stiyl Magnus.

Considering that Oriana and Lidvia’s objective was not ‘to hand over a spiritual item in Academy City’, but to ‘activate it inside’, they might be hiding somewhere to avoid being pursued. So it was hard for them to carry out the tactic of capturing Oriana and Lidvia while they were moving to prevent this

deal that was proposed before. This was Stiyl’s suggestion.

Right now, they were looking for the conditions to use the Croce di Pietro. Now that they had lost track of Oriana and there was no clue that could lead them to her, they could only rely on finding this out.

Tsuchimikado’s view was that: If the Roman Catholic Church’s aim was to take over Academy City using the Croce di Pietro, then there was no need to wait, so why hadn't they used it earlier? Since they had not done so, perhaps there were some special conditions to be fulfilled?

If ‘there were no special conditions, they couldn’t possibly use the Croce di Pietro’, so by destroying that special condition, they could prevent Oriana’s objective from being fulfilled. Since it was impossible for them to just chase after her, in order to counter those women who were hiding in Academy City, the only thing they could do was to look in this direction.

However…

“…They’re so slow.”

Kamijou couldn’t help but mutter.

It should be a few hours since he had separated from Oriana. Though there was nothing that Kamijou could do, he was worrying about whether he should be idling around. In this situation when they didn’t know how the Croce di Pietro could be used, they felt rather anxious about it.

And the thing that made Kamijou even more worried was,

He had the best trump card with him.

(Index…)

She was a person with complete memory of 103,000 grimoires, a living magical library. Among that vast pool of knowledge, there would definitely be information about the Croce di Pietro.

The easiest way was to ask her. If it was Index, whether it was about the Croce di Pietro or anything else, if it was any question related to magic, one would get

the answer within 5 seconds. The original reason why Necessarius had set up this ‘Magical Index’ position was because of this.

They’d immediately get the answer once they asked her.

However, they couldn’t ask.

(‘External forces’ outside Academy City?)

There were major and minor magical groups outside Academy City. Once they found out that there were magic-related incidents in Academy City, they’d rush in.

However, not all of them were friendly to Academy City. Among them, some even wanted to barge into Academy City, which normally prohibited entry, to do some sabotage work.

Most of these groups were outside Academy City, using ‘magic searching’ spells. And most of their searches centered around Index, as there had been quite a few magic-related cases in the past. Thus, if something happened, she was the biggest suspect.

Thus,

(If we let Index get near the core of this issue, the searching magic can find Oriana’s magic. Thus we can’t afford to get Index involved the case, nor can we allow her to get close to it. It’ll be dangerous the moment she realizes that something’s amiss.)

Index had a vast amount of knowledge about magic. Thus, she couldn’t possibly miss any magic-related presence. And once she got the slightest clue, with her personality, she’d immediately jump into the situation even if Kamijou told her not to.

“Really, the clue’s right in front of me, and I really want to ask. But we’re doomed if I ask a question. Damn it, I’m in a dilemma.”

Kamijou couldn’t help but sigh as he muttered.

“What do you mean by a dilemma?”

On hearing a voice beside him, Kamijou suddenly trembled. He timidly looked around, and there was a girl with long black hair sitting on the bench for who knows how long. The girl was wearing PE attire, Himegami Aisa. Under the school regulated attire of short-sleeved shirt and shorts, there should be a silver Cross hanging around her neck. Right now, there should be a thin chain under the black hair that covered all the way from the neck to the clavicle. This necklace extended from her neck to inside her shirt.

“Hi…Himegami? Why are you here…?”

“There’s a troublesome situation, so I’m here looking for you.”

What’s going on? Kamijou tilted his head. Himegami Aisa was a girl whom lacked facial emotions, so it was normally hard to tell whether she was angry or sad. One could still believe her when she said ‘I’m hungry,’ and no one would question her when she said that ‘I want to raise a cat’ as well.

Thus, Kamijou asked honestly,

“What’s the troublesome thing now?”

“Ngh, Komoe-sensei had a bit of trouble. She looks rather angry.”

“???”

After hearing this, Kamijou decided to follow Himegami first. Himegami grabbed Kamijou’s wrist, and pulling him along and saying “Here, here.”

Kamijou saw that the two of them were holding hands. Seeing Kamijou stare at the hands that were held together, Himegami slightly frowned.

“Is there a problem?”

“Oh, it’s nothing. Himegami doesn’t seem to mind at all.”

“__”

At this moment, Himegami suddenly let go. She was still stoic, but it seemed that she was a little red now. She pulled the hand that had been holding Kamijou’s hand near her chest, and covered it with the other hand. Though one

couldn’t really tell, it seemed that she was mindful about it.

Himegami Aisa brought him to a rather large park.

Maybe it was because lunch break was over that there were very few people around. Today’s main event was Daihaseisai, so the competitors and spectators were headed to the crowded arenas. So many people were walking on the streets, and they were basically either moving from one arena to another, or were buying souvenirs. Especially those tourists from the neighborhood nearby who’d buy entrance tickets in order to sightsee around Academy City, everyone was busy attending the events, and there was no time to slack.

In this deserted park, there was a bench.

On the bench, Komoe-sensei, who was wearing a similar cheerleading attire, was rather angry. She was passionately talking about a smoker’s etiquette and under aged smoking.

On the other hand, treating these words as a mere distraction was the magician Stiyl Magnus. His face didn’t show a frustrated look just because he was being lectured, but he was showing a smile that made him look somewhat tired and bothersome.

Komoe-sensei was trying to confiscate the cigarette packs from Stiyl’s hands, but Stiyl was tossing it around like a ball, and Komoe-sensei couldn’t catch up. From afar, the way she continued to leap and miss was like a dog chasing after a plastic ball.

“It’s there, there. The man who saved me the last time is arguing with Komoe-sensei. I don’t know what to do.”

Himegami looked at the scene in front, seemingly finding it awkward. To her, though Komoe-sensei was her savior, but originally, in the ‘Misawa Cram School’ case when the alchemist was highly active in the shadows, Stiyl Magnus was also her savior. She probably didn’t want to see both sides arguing. But, on seeing that priest, who had the smell of perfume all over him, Kamijou showed a look of irritation and disgust that he had been feeling.

“I say…Himegami, there’s no need to stop them. For that guy’s good, he should let Komoe-sensei scold him badly.”

Hearing Kamijou say this, Himegami looked troubled, and said,

“But, that smoker man has been staring at us. He looks disturbed.”

“That guy is now so happy because a little girl hooked up onto him, it’s alright even if we don’t bother them.”

“But, Komoe-sensei’s face is all red now, it seems that she’s so angry that she’s tired now.”

“That sensei would be even happy on seeing a bad kid; no need to worry about her.”

Seeing Kamijou shaking his head nearby, Komoe-sensei didn’t stop trying to grab the hand in the air that was holding the cigarette pack.

“Ah, Kamijou-chan!! What are you standing around for, come and help sensei!! This child is a terrifying heavy smoker! I say, can you help me get that cigarette pack and hand it over to me!?”

At his wits end, Kamijou could only approach Komoe-sensei and Stiyl.

Kamijou first stared at Komoe-sensei, then turned to look at Stiyl, who was sitting on the bench.

“…How nice, there’re still people who are willing to be angry because of you.”

“I’d like to agree with you on this, Kamijou Touma, but I’m a bit busy now. She’s really noisy.”

Stiyl said.

He tossed the cigarette pack high up, and at the same time, in a manner like he was arranging his work tie, he pointed to the phone strap in his chest pocket. This tasteless skeleton-shaped light was flashing, indicating an incoming call. He let Kamijou see it, again caught the cigarette pack naturally, and continued to play ‘toss the ball’ with Komoe-sensei.

The contact that the man was contacting…should be a member of the Anglican Church. If it involved information about the Croce di Pietro, he definitely

couldn’t allow Komoe-sensei to hear it.

“Ah! You tossed it to the other side!”

Just as Kamijou was thinking about this, with Komoe-sensei’s words, something flew over from the corner of his vision. He frantically grabbed it and examined it, it seemed to be a brand that was commonly seen in movies.

Stiyl ignored Komoe-sensei’s words, as he made a gesture with his index and middle fingers, and brought them to his mouth. Don’t tell me it’s a disgusting kiss!? Kamijou readied his guard before realizing that it was a sign that he wanted a smoke.

Kamijou, who realized this, shifted the hand with the cigarette pack over to Himegami, and asked,

“Himegami, do you have a lighter?”

Eh?

Compared to Himegami, who was slow on the realization, Komoe-sensei turned around at quite a speed.

“Kamijou-chan! What kind of useless fighting spirit are you trying to use! Himegami-chan, you should be stopping him too!!”

Komoe-sensei approached at a very fast pace. Seeing this, Stiyl pulled out the cell phone in his chest pocket, put it near his ear, turned and left.

(It’s great if it’s information about the Croce di Pietro. If not, it’ll be useless if I ticked off by Komoe-sensei. I don’t want to smoke at all, so how should I explain this misunderstanding!?)

Seeing Komoe-sensei start to tear up due to pure rage, Kamijou started to panic. At this moment, it was his phone that rang now. Who was calling now? Kamijou tilted his head as he reached for his shorts’ pocket.

“Kamijou-chan! Shut your phone when sensei is lecturing!!”

“Wa!!”

Being pestered by Komoe-sensei, Kamijou inadvertently fell backwards. Komoe-sensei grabbed the cigarette pack that Kamijou accidentally let loose into the air, and at this moment, Kamijou grabbed the phone in his pocket. He saw the screen; it was from Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

(For that guy would call at this time, it means that there's some activity going on from Oriana's side? …Damn it, that means that I can't straggle around here, and I can't let Komoe-sensei hear the contents of the conversation…)

In front of Komoe-sensei, who shouted "KAMIJOU!!", Kamijou suddenly darted behind Himegami. The black-haired girl blushed upon being grabbed on the shoulders from behind, but Kamijou, who was behind, didn't notice this.

Kamijou thought about his strategy as he wondered how to settle the situation.

"Hey, Himegami, I'm handing this over to you! I've already done what you requested, to break Komoe-sensei and Stiyl's argument, so the rest is up to you!!"

With an almost desperate cry, Kamijou ran away from the scene. As Komoe-sensei was about to chase after him—

"Wa, Himegami-chan! What are you doing! Why are you hugging sensei out of a sudden!!"

The other person seemed to be fulfilling her part of the deal as she prevented Komoe-sensei from moving forward any further.

Deep inside, Kamijou was swearing that he'd treat Himegami Aisa to some okonomiyaki from some stalls later as he rushed out of the park.

It should be something important, as the phone continued to ring for quite a while. Just as Tsuchimikado was about to leave a message, Kamijou pressed the call button.

"Oh, Kami-yan! Stiyl's phone seems to be busy, I can't contact him. Is he with you nya!? If you know where he is, can you help me pass a message?"

"What?"

Kamijou pondered for a while,

“…Ah, someone seems to be contacting him just now. Is the thing you’re going to talk about related to Oriana? Did she do anything bad again!?”

“No, the situation’s not that serious…ah, it’s better for Kami-yan to know. I’m using a unique way to check Academy City’s security, the method that Anti-Skill and Judgment members use nya. As machines are unable to handle magic, I didn’t expect too much from it — I found it.”

Hearing this, the fine hair on Kamijou straightened up.

Tsuchimikado continued,

“Around 3 minutes ago, in District 5— I found her walking out of the entrance of the ‘Seibu Hill Station’ in the next area, but she’s gone after that. She must have used a spell that blocks visual information, or she’s hiding in the blind corner of the cameras. I can’t tell as of now.”

“3 minutes ago…that’s kind of hard.”

The shortest distance for getting to District 5 from where he was at was around 4 kilometers.

If they were to head towards the station in question, Oriana might take this chance to escape.

“There’s no need to pursue Oriana completely. Once you reach Seibu Hill station, ask Stiyl to use the seeking magic. You just need to grab the correct coordinates and take her down, thus ending everything.”

The seeking method.

He remembered that it was called the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’.

It was originally Tsuchimikado’s spell, but now Stiyl was using it. It was a spell that could carry a search with a radius of 3 kilometers with the caster as the center. The condition for using it was that it required a spiritual item of the search target in order to work. Right now, they had Oriana’s flashcard.

“If the enemy heads forward by 3 kilometers, she’ll leave the search vicinity. If so, we have to move forward by 4 kilometers in order to carry out our search. Can we still make it!?”

"That’s why you have to be quick, Kami-yan. Even if you have to use an auto-bus, you have to make it to where Stiyl is!!”

The line was cut.

If they couldn’t find out the conditions and weaknesses of the Croce di Pietro, this might be their last chance. Rather, they had to treat it as game over the moment they couldn’t find them.

“Damn it! Stiyl!!”

Kamijou shouted out. He returned to where Himegami and Komoe-sensei might be—the park. Right now, the only one who could use the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ to sniff out Oriana was Stiyl.

Kamijou was looking around quickly. The good news was that Oriana might not have realized that she was spotted. If she ran away, they might not make it in time.

The enemy was walking, while Kamijou was running.

He could only use this speed to make up for the difference in time.

## Between the lines 4

Fukiyose Seiri was sitting on a long chair in the hospital waiting room.

The frog-faced doctor said that all the necessary procedures were completed, so it was alright for her to walk about in the hospital. The nurses were laughing,

saying, “This is truly a miracle, one won’t be healed that quickly.” They were really gossipers.

Fukiyose got off her bed. In order to confirm her condition, she decided to walk around in the hospital.

“…Ugh.”

She pressed on her temples with one hand, gently shaking her head.

Arriving in front of the elevator, she felt a slight headache. This was the reason why she had been assigned to a hospital bed — in other words, it was not just a simple checkup, but rather she had been told to stay in the hospital for one day.

The symptoms of a severe heatstroke, a severe headache or a strong rejection, could be cured by a doctor, but she could only slowly recover the energy lost. Though there were no obvious wounds or symptoms, Fukiyose’s body wasn’t exactly in healthy condition.

She saw a small button that was in her hand.

It was a mechanical box that was as big as a matchstick box. It seemed to be a portable nurse call. As electronics couldn’t be used in a hospital, it might be a modified version of an alarm sold wholesale. Just holding such a thing told her that her body’s condition wasn’t good.

Fukiyose Seiri looked around.

There was a space that also doubled as a smoking area. It was an area that was near the elevator, and it was not separated by any walls. There was a ditch on the ground of the entrance and an air vent of an air purifier formed a curtain of air. In this rectangular area, there was an even small rectangle-shaped bench, with a circular ashtray placed in the middle.

She ignored the smoking facilities and just stared at the corner with her giddy head.

There was a row of four vending machines that sold drinks.

“…Do I need to drink these drinks in order to replenish my strength?”

Her words lacked the domineering attitude that she normally had. The moment she got up from the long chair, a slight pain could be felt from the right side of her temple to the left. She was not going to be able to take part in the afternoon events.

Fukiyose frowned as she slowly moved towards the vending machine. She placed her cell phone, which could be used as a wallet, on an electronic reader, and lights appeared, indicating the buttons that could be pressed.

“Let’s see, the most ideal one should have…glucose, amino acids, minerals, and…ha…HACHOO!!”

As she thought, she suddenly sneezed.

After shaking her head, her forehead slammed hard onto a button on the vending machine. Klang klang. A drink that Fukiyose didn’t intend to drink rolled out.

Enduring the sharp pain on her head, Fukiyose confirmed what she got. It was a strange drink with the words ‘condensed milk soda’ written on it.

“…This is way too unhealthy.”

She couldn’t help but say this as she held the drink with one hand, but she couldn’t just throw it away like this. Fukiyose Seiri didn’t know what to do, as she could only walk back along where came from and back to her room.

The inorganic corridor that she walked along just now looked like a Silk Road in the desert.

She was already like this indoors, and it was hard to imagine what the feeling would be if she were to run under that hot, cruel and unbearable sun.

(Really, when…can I…)

Fukiyose dragged her body along, and sighed,

(…Can I return back to my work? I don’t know what kind of trouble that guy will end up getting if I’m not around.)

# Chapter 6: Resumption of Pursuit with an End. *Accidental_Firing.*

## Part 1

“Really! It’s because of Himegami-chan that sensei lost sight of Kamijou-chan!”

Komoe-sensei was walking along an area full of student dormitories as she exclaimed to a girl beside her.

In comparison, the black-haired girl clad in PE attire who was following her homeroom teacher, Himegami Aisa, was holding a transparent plastic cup that had fruit juice in it. She was surprisingly laid back as she said,

“But sensei, the next match is about to start soon.”

“Humph! I know. That’s why I wanted to settle this quickly, finish lecturing him, and bring him back to the other students!”

The duo walked along an area that was close to the boundary of District 7. Besides the park where Kamijou and Stiyl had escaped from a moment ago, there were many constructs here, like shopping streets and student dormitories. The difference in height between these buildings was huge, as they looked like the teeth of a comb.

Maybe this place was somewhat far away from the schools — or we should call it arenas — as the people here were looking for souvenirs. Several tourists were looking at the stores selling key-chains and puzzles strangely. Basically, the citizens of this city wouldn’t even look at these things.

Komoe-sensei sighed,

“I know, let’s assume that Kamijou-chan is waiting for us there. Himegami-chan, you have to be faster!”

“Nn.”

Himegami sipped some of the fruit juice and responded. Himegami sounded like something was on her mind, as Komoe-sensei tilted her head.

“…Himegami-chan, is there anything troubling you? Sensei is willing to hear out your troubles!”

“It’s not exactly troubles.”

Himegami removed her lips from the cup,

“Kamijou-kun seems to be a bit weird. It’s like he’s distracted.”

“Hgn. Now that you mention it, he did seem a bit anxious. However, isn’t it because the next match is starting?”

“…But, that feeling…”

Himegami paused for a while.

She had personally felt this especially tense atmosphere before. It was when a certain boy with just a fist faced an alchemist that had almost god-like powers and was trying to kill him. For those that he wanted to protect, for victory, he’d even let his right arm get cut just to turn it into a fighting force.

But—

“Maybe I’m thinking too much.”

“??? What’s that supposed to mean?”

Himegami stared at Komoe-sensei, who gave a puzzled look, and thought rather irritatedly,

(But if it’s just about Daihaseisai, this shouldn’t be happening.)

Komoe-sensei looked up and stared at the black-haired girl who was drowning in her own thoughts. She tugged at Himegami's shirt from the bottom, saying,

"In other words, you're mindful about Kamijou."

"—"

Himegami suddenly froze.

The fruit juice in Himegami's hand nearly dropped out, as she revealed a rare look of panic, and grabbed it again.

"This is true, but the way you're saying this is too direct, and may cause a misunderstanding."

"Isn't it like this?"

"…Then, is Komoe-sensei mindful about Kamijou-san?"

Komoe-sensei nearly fell on the ground, when there was nothing around. The miniskirt of her cheerleading attire nearly flipped up, but luckily, nothing was exposed. She forcefully looked up,

"Wha…what are you saying, Himegami! As Kamijou's homeroom teacher, sensei has to educate Kamijou! Eve…eveeven if I'm mindful about Kamijou, it's because I'm worried for his future. The way you say it may cause a misunderstanding instead—"

"This is what I meant."

"…"

Komoe-sensei kept quiet. Himegami extended the hand of hers that didn't have the drink and grabbed Komoe-sensei's thin arm. She confirmed whether Komoe-sensei, who fell onto the floor, was injured, and after doing so, seemed to feel relieved as she squinted her eyes.

"However, it's better to prevent saying it like that. My relationship with Kamijou isn't that good. If misunderstood, Kamijou would be troubled."

Eh? Komoe-sensei's face changed slightly.

"Haha, it's because Himegami-chan thinks like this, that you avoided talking about the Night Parade in front of Kamijou-chan? You already read through the tour guidebook that was handed out seriously. To a certain extent, the Night Parade is an exciting war for students that can be compared to the day events."

During Daihaseisai, there would be a large lights festival held after sunset, which involved neon lights and lasers. Also, there would be a decorated car and mobile stage procession after the matches. As Daihaseisai accepted television sponsors, the scale of this procession couldn't be underestimated. Also, there would be several actors participating as well.

The board of directors of Academy City would normally ban anyone from going out at night, and had set all traffic to stop when school had completely closed. But for today, they even promoted a Night Parade. Though it was not like those large-scale events seen on Christmas day or Valentine's day, it was still an event favored by the students.

But,

"It's impossible."

Himegami denied it flatly.

"For someone like me, even if I suddenly invite him, Kamijou-kun would be surprised. It's not suitable. So I guess I shouldn't ask him."

When she slightly squinted her eyes, Himegami looked rather gentle. At the same time, she seemed to be somewhat depressed.

For Komoe-sensei, she loved to see students having such a troubled expression.

"It's not like that. Kamijou-chan may be a bit surprised, but it's a pleasant one. Kamijou-chan would be happy to see you happy, and he'd be sad if you're sad. He's that kind of a child. Sensei is very clear about this."

She looked up at the student who was much taller than her.

"So, if you invite Kamijou-chan to an event which you'll feel happy to be at,

he’ll be happy as well. As long as you say that it’s the Night Parade, there wouldn’t be any problems.”

Hearing this, Himegami blinked her eyes.

Her normally emotionless face now looked rather surprised.

Himegami gently shook the transparent cup that had fruit juice in it. Then, she faced Komoe-sensei and squinted her eyes to form a smile that couldn’t be detected easily.

“No, I don’t want to.”

“Humph! Sensei is trying her best to encourage the cowardly Himegami-chan, why are you so stubborn?”

“Anyway, I won’t invite him.”

Seeing Komoe-sensei go red with anger, Himegami silently let go of the pressure on her shoulders.

## Part 2

Kamijou Touma and Stiyl were running on the streets.

There were various competitions being held at various arenas, as match reports were aired through the audio speakers and big screens all over the place. Kamijou’s school was about to begin the ‘Boys only: Cavalry war, preliminary group A’ match. Too bad he couldn’t spare the time to take part in the event.

“Kamijou Touma! If we’re heading towards an auto-bus stop, it’ll be faster for us if we take this lane!”

“No, I checked the bus schedule. It’ll be faster to take a train! There’s too many

stops if we take the bus, and though we have to wait a while for the train to move, once it starts, it'll overtake the bus!!"

The duo exclaimed loudly as they turned into an alley, and dashed down a staircase that lead to the basement. Through the narrow concrete path of the station, Kamijou placed his cell phone on the auto-ticket gate blocking him. In Academy City, it was not uncommon to see cell phones functioning as ID identifiers and cashcards.

However, these automated gates could only respond to phones of Academy City. Stiyl slid his tongue back as he headed towards the ticket vending machine. The reason why he didn't force himself past the ticket gate was because in this situation, he felt that it was better not to arouse any trouble. He seemed to find carrying coins irritating, as he slotted a 1000-yen note into the machine, grabbed the change and ticket, and returned.

At last, Stiyl passed through the gate.

The train in the subway was about to move as an electronic alarm was heard. Kamijou, who had arrived first at the platform, ran into the train, while Stiyl, who arrived later, stretched his hand out just as the door was about to close. Due to the safety functions of the door, it opened, and Stiyl squeezed into the train. The station personnel seemed to be staring at him, but he didn't bother about such a trivial thing.

The train was starting slowly.

Kamijou leaned his back onto the train's door, and said,

"…There're still 2 stops to Seibu Hill Station that Tsuchimikado mentioned."

Kamijou looked up at the electronic bulletin board, and muttered. Stiyl, who placed his coins into his wallet, suddenly searched through the inside of his clothes, and pulled out a new cigarette pack.

Kamijou exclaimed,

"How many packs do you even have!!??"

"None of your business."

Stiyl ignored Kamijou as he pulled out a cigarette from the box.

“Ah! You can’t smoke inside the train. This train will stop if the sensors sense any smoke.”

Kamijou frantically stopped him, and Stiyl clicked his tongue with frustration. Normally, he’d ignore Kamijou’s words, but as he knew that there was an urgent need to track down Oriana, he frowned as he placed the cigarette back.

After this, he pulled out another pack from his coat. It was as big as a cigarette box, a box made of old wood. Stiyl pulled out something from inside, and started to chew on it like a cigarette.

“This is chewing tobacco.”

“…You really like tobacco, huh?”

“A world without nicotine and tar is no different from Hell. For such a pious man like me, how can I fall into Hell?”

“You might want to reflect on your life before saying that.”

Just as the two were rebutting each other, the train arrived at the first stop. Some passengers alighted, and the new passengers who boarded the train were shocked by Stiyl’s strange attire.

The train doors closed and moved off.

There was still one stop left.

“Next…”

Oriana Thomson was at District 5, saying in a rather relaxed tone.

She knew that the attention of the pedestrians was fixated on her. There were many foreign tourists here for Daihaseisai, and thus, having blond hair and green eyes wasn’t rare. What attracted their attention was the remarkable symmetry of her body and the matching clothes which emphasized her beauty. Though the fashion sense of this country was rather liberal nowadays, it was still rather rare

to see someone revealing her beautiful legs through a skirt that had vertical slits. It was also rare to see someone needing to wear a Sarong skirt when she was not wearing swimming attire.

But Oriana did not care about the people looking at her.

As a person being pursued, it was highly unnatural.

(Well…we may need to spend some more time. Never mind, I'll hand this over to Lidvia. Now, what should this nee-chan do. Hmm…)

Seemed like Oriana wanted to attract attention as she continued to walks on the streets.

She looked confident.

She didn't care about whether she might be spotted by her pursuers.

The train stopped again.

The second station.

They finally arrived at Seibu Hill Station.

As doors on both sides of the train opened, Kamijou and Stiyl dashed onto the platform. They immediately ran towards the nearest exit. Stiyl stopped halfway to spit his chewing tobacco into the dustbin and said,

"Damn it, where's Tsuchimikado? We can't use that searching 'All-Around Reality Circle' if he's not here to prepare it!!"

He exclaimed as he operated his phone. Though it was the underground, maybe it was because it was near a communication base, the phone connected.

"Tsuchimikado!!"

"Nya. I'm sorry. The auto-bus I'm on is near the station…there seems to be a 10 kilometer race in the vicinity. Because of the changes in schedule, the event was brought forward. Right now, the bus is stuck in a jam."

Stiyl slid his tongue back without trying to hide it.

“What’s the distance!?”

“If I have to get off the bus and run, it’ll take 10 minutes.”

Kamijou thought, this is bad.

3 minutes passed when Tsuchimikado contacted Kamijou, saying that he found Oriana. Another 5 minutes was spent arriving to this station. Then they still needed to wait for another ten minutes before they could start preparing the searching magic. It was hard to imagine where she might be now. He had heard Tsuchimikado say before that the searching spell used to seek out Oriana, the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’, had a search radius of 3 kilometers. If Oriana found out about their movements, they might end up letting her escape again.

Tsuchimikado probably understood this, as he said in a bitter tone,

“Stiyl, do you still remember what my ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ looks like?”

“Impossible.”

“Can you draw it if I instruct you through the phone?”

“It’s impossible. For me to learn the procedures, it’s useless for me if I don’t know the theory behind it. I have absolutely no concept knowledge on Eastern magic. Especially since that ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ that you prepare uses the pulse flow of the place and space; Western magic and Eastern magic are vastly different. I’m not that child as well anyway. Do you intend to teach me the essence of Onmyodo all in one go?”

“…Then are you going to use your Western method to search?”

“Even so, I’ll request you to do it. I’m a complete amateur at doing this.”

“So…never mind, you’re right.”

The bitter sigh reached the microphone, creating noise.

After feeling a bit troubled, Tsuchimikado said,

“Alright, I’ll activate the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ from here.”

Hearing these words, Kamijou was shocked.

“What are you scared about? A ten minute walking distance may cause a fatal error. Instead of spending time running to the station, I should do this anyway. Oriana may be taking a subway train or an auto-bus nya. It’s better if we do the search earlier.”

Before Kamijou said anything, Tsuchimikado gave his own conclusion.

“I’ll inform you of the results of the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ through the phone later. Stiyl, Kami-yan, go chase after Oriana. The one holding the Croce di Pietro might not be Oriana, but Lidvia. If possible, capture her alive.”

“Wait…”

Hearing this, Kamijou couldn’t take it any longer.

“Wait a sec, Tsuchimikado! You can use magic again?”

Tsuchimikado Motoharu couldn’t use magic.

More accurately, though he could use magic, once he used it, the inside of his body would explode, because he was both a magician and an esper at the same time. As the body structure of an esper was different from an ordinary human, it’d cause a strong rejection if he used magic ‘that was meant for ordinary people.’

He couldn’t possibly not know that.

He had used magic once today, causing him to bleed.

And right now, he was saying that he was going to use the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’. For someone who had already used magic once, he might be in critical condition if he was to use magic again.

But, he didn’t answer Kamijou’s concern.

Tsuchimikado didn’t answer, and even Stiyl didn’t reply.

Seemed like Stiyl wanted to shut Kamijou up, as he said loudly to Tsuchimikado,

“…Are you sure you can do it?”

“I don’t know; why are you worrying for me nya? I’m a magician, a specialist who can use magic? And Kami-yan, if you want to complain, I’ll listen to you while I’m on the hospital bed. If you’re visiting, please bring some honey dew and apples.”

“TSUCHIMIKADO!!”

As Kamijou shouted, the phone was cut off.

Stiyl placed his phone back into his pocket.

“Hm. The next time that guy calls again, it’ll be after he activated the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’. We can’t let that guy’s efforts go to waste. Let’s not have any unnecessary thoughts now, Kamijou Touma.”

“Damn it!!”

As Stiyl mentioned this, Kamijou couldn’t help but slam a fist into the concrete wall.

“That’s superfluous.”

Stiyl didn’t seem to like it as he said this, taking out another cigarette from his coat.

One minute later, Stiyl’s phone rang.

It was from Tsuchimikado.

The contents of the conversation were that he was going to a place where nobody was around to activate the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’.

Oriana’s shoulders trembled.

(Oh—this…is the same as the spell used before. Are they mocking this nee-chan

who can’t use the same spell again?)

She thought as she walked down the middle of a path in District 5.

The enemy’s searching method was to use Oriana’s flashcard to find Oriana’s whereabouts — more accurately, it was the unstable grimoire ‘original’ that had maybe the smallest handwriting in the world that she thought of writing on the go.

But for Oriana, she changed the activation and deactivation of a spell to the ‘activation and self-destruction of an unstable original.’ As Oriana’s own magical power was needed, and the card had the function of ‘sensing Oriana’s orders,’ they could track down where she was through this reverse process.

If so,

(This nee-chan’s card…what do they call it over there? Never mind, anyway, it’s related to this nee-chan’s magical power, so when the enemy does anything to the card, this nee-chan will be able to sense the changes.)

Thinking about this, Oriana hastened herself.

There existed spells that ignored distance. Especially in assassination, attacks that nobody could escape from even if they ran to the ends of the world were highly valued.

But,

(This is different.)

When the ball was burnt in a fireball, she felt that her pursuers pulled away from her in fear. If the spell could ignore distance and do a global search, there was no problem if she walked slowly.

(If so, the better method would be to walk further away…even so, it’s still troublesome. How far should this nee-chan go, and in which direction?)

Oriana tilted her head, and passed through wave after wave of people.

(Now, where should I go?)

She thought as she looked up at the airship floating in the sky.

Kamijou and Stiyl dashed up the stairs leading to the surface, running out of the subway station.

District 5 was different from the District 7 that Kamijou stayed in, as there were many colleges and universities. Though the rows and rows of buildings did form a similar sophisticated feeling, the restaurants and clothes shops had a more mature feeling compared to other districts. To high school student Kamijou, it was an atmosphere that he couldn't get familiar with. It was like he was thrown into a world famous symphony performance that he had no interest in attending.

But right now, he didn't have time to notice this.

Kamijou and Stiyl were running around, spoiling the atmosphere of the entire street.

Stiyl's phone showed where they should be heading to.

He continued to run hard.

"…Oriana…she sensed it. Her movements suddenly changed…she's now heading towards the northwest direction. The distance is around 300 to 500 meters…wait a sec, I'll get a lock-on soon."

The voice stopped several times, but it was not because of network problems. The contact, Tsuchimikado, may be bleeding all over, enduring this strong pain as he used magic.

Stiyl slightly panted,

"500 meters? Sounds near…but it's going to be difficult for us if we're going to run over and catch her. Let me confirm this, can you use the Red Spell artillery strike?"

"Impossible nya…if I have to do that, I'll need to stop the 'All-Around Reality Circle' and focus on the Red Spell. But if so, we can't locate Oriana while she continues to escape, and thus the accuracy would be much less."

“More importantly, we can’t add onto Tsuchimikado’s burden!!”

Kamijou said as he ran, while Stiyl gave an irritated look. He shook the cigarette in his mouth and said,

“The effective range for the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ is about 3 kilometers. We’ll be out if she moves for another 2.5 kilometers. Even if we have to add on to someone’s burden, we have to close the distance.”

“I know that…!!”

The two shouted at each other as they ran on the path on the side of the road. They ran into a small alley and through this zigzag path, exited to another road, ran up an overhead bridge, and ran down the stairs on the other side.

“…Response, got it…from where Kami-yan’s facing, Oriana’s…still in the northwest position…the distance is now 309 meters to 433 meters…anyway, it seems like she’s moving in a straight line…to escape this detection nya…hurry up, there’s still around 1.7 kilometers of effective range.”

Like a marathon runner getting a drink, Kamijou grabbed a free guide brochure that a Judgment member was handing out.

“Northwest, 303 to 433…WA!”

As he was reading the guide while running, Kamijou nearly knocked into a cylindrical security robot on the road. Kamijou frantically avoided it as the security robot behind him gave off a warning alarm.

“Maybe, it’s that…? Around 800 meters from here, there’s a monorail station. That one goes around the entirety of District 5. If she gets onto it, she’ll pass 3 kilometers easily.”

Though there were 800 meters for them, there were only 400 to 500 meters left for Oriana. If they considered the amount of time needed to buy the tickets and wait for the monorail, how many minutes did they have? Since the monorail company would likely increase the number of trips in conjunction with Daihaseisai, the next train might arrive in around 2 minutes.

But, on the other side of the call, Tsuchimikado suddenly said something strange,

“No, wait a sec…Oriana suddenly changed direction.”

The sound of pages could be heard. Tsuchimikado must be confirming his spell with the information on the Daihaseisai tour booklet.

“Heading towards that monorail station…she turns around a corner…Oriana doesn’t seem to be heading towards the station—!! What, she actually increased her speed…!!?”

What? Kamijou frowned as he ran.

Stiyl, who was running beside, was listening to the sound that was coming from the phone in his hand.

The surroundings were rather noisy, their footsteps and panting were as loud too, but Kamijou felt that there was a long silence deep inside his ears.

The other side of the phone went silent. Maybe Tsuchimikado was controlling the spell, as the sound of fingers rubbing against the ground could be heard. A monotonous tone gave the feeling that time was distorted.

“Damn it, where’s she heading to…it hurts! Damn it, to think at this time…”

Seemed like trying to maintain the spell added on to Tsuchimikado’s pain. Just as Kamijou was about to say something, Tsuchimikado said,

“No…problem, Kami-yan…Oriana’s position, I’ll get it soon—oi, NO WAY!?”

His tone seemed to indicate that he was rather surprised.

“This path…damn it, so this is how it is. THAT ORIANA, DON’T TELL ME THAT SHE’S—!!”

With Tsuchimikado’s exclamation, noise suddenly cackled from the phone. The sound of a cutting board being ground could be heard from the microphone, and with this unnatural noise, the line was cut off. It felt like radio contact was cut off out of necessity.

Kamijou started to get anxious. Without Tsuchimikado’s directions, they couldn’t tell where Oriana was heading. Even if they felt that they might have

closed the distance, there was a likelihood that they may end up adding some distance.

“What now? Oi, Stiyl, how’s the handphone antenna?”

“How come I can’t make a call now? Hold on, Kamijou Touma.”

Stiyl suddenly grabbed onto Kamijou’s collar. As he reined in, Kamijou, who was running beside Stiyl just now, could only stop obstinately. Stiyl ignored Kamijou, who was beside him and coughing violently, and said,

“…We’ve been had.”

“Ahem! You…what are you doing, idiot!”

“Even if Oriana finds out about her being tracked by the searching magic, she probably doesn’t know ‘how far she should run.’ In this situation, she can’t set the tactic of where should she run off to. Then what should she do? She should probably get the answer rather soon.”

“Oi.”

Kamijou had a bad premonition.

The unnatural way that call ended and Tsuchimikado’s cry inexplicably rang in his ears.

“Like how you imagined it, Kamijou Touma. In order to escape this searching magic, Oriana chose not to widen the distance, but to close it…to destroy the man at the center, Tsuchimikado, which is also another winning condition for her.”

“Wait a sec, wouldn’t she…!?”

“There’s no ‘wouldn’t she’, there’s an 80 to 90% chance that she’s heading towards Tsuchimikado.”

“Then we should hurry up and get there! That guy forced himself to use magic, and now his body is almost broken up! Where is Tsuchimikado!?”

“How would I know?”

Facing Kamijou’s shouts, Stiyl reported honestly.

Then he added on another sentence,

“That’s why I’m looking for him now.”

## Part 3

“Gack…gack…!?”

Tsuchimikado Motoharu tumbled two to three times on the marble-like surface. The impact caused the cell phone in his hand to fly out and smash into a nearby pillar.

He was on a road that linked several underground streets together. It was 8 meters wide, and about a 100 meters long. As there was a famous underground street that was commonly used as a shortcut, including the store owners, there was almost nobody there. There were large cylindrical pillars that split the place into north and south zones, and the hidden side of the pillars was equivalent to the blind corner of the security camera.

The bus that Tsuchimikado had taken couldn’t proceed due to the 10km race. He hastily looked for a place where there were no people, and activated the searching magic ‘All-Around Reality Circle’.

A rough sound was heard.

The ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ that he had drawn on the ground was trampled by someone and scattered all over the place.

“You can’t be too careless, you know. You intended to find this nee-chan’s

whereabouts through things that are mine. On the other hand, you seem to forget that this nee-chan can also sense you as well. Oi, boys who do things their own ways might be hated, you know?”

A teasing tone.

And at the same time, an opponent with such strong power.

Oriana Thomson.

A different look compared to before. She had already changed out of her work clothes, and was now wearing a dark-colored mini top and a light-colored long skirt that had vertical slits like curtains. As the skirt could not function like a normal skirt, there was a Sarong skirt that was used for covering swimming attire, now wrapped around her waist. But her fluffy blond hair and beauty, that beautiful impression of sweet curves that seemed to melt like sugar inside a mouth, could not be overwritten so easily just because she changed clothes.

She played with the flashcards that had a metal ring passed through them.

“Of the people I’ve met up till now, it seems that you’re the most clear-headed, and at the same time, the most dangerous one. So this nee-chan is here to take care of you.”

“Cheh…”

Tsuchimikado got away from the circular platform in the middle as he stood up.

If he didn’t know that the enemy’s attack could be prevented by something blocking, the walls and the pillar—would become obstacles for him.

“…Everything will be alright if you hurry up and hand over the Croce di Pietro and surrender with Lidvia, or do you want to be a mollusc that has its bones wrecked?”

“Ah, even if I tell you that I have no interest in fighting, this nee-chan likes to play some exciting games. I’ll play with you until your waist breaks.”

Oriana gave a happy look as she answered, but in fact, she was calculating the distance between her and Tsuchimikado. Tsuchimikado gritted his teeth as

Oriana pinpointed his position.

(Kami-yan and Stiyl…)

From his temple to his flank, and including his limbs, blood was seeping out. This wasn't caused by Oriana, but the rejection his body did when he used magic.

(…Can't rely on them. Though the walking distance is only about 10 minutes, I didn't tell them exactly where I am. Besides, I chose to come to this place where no one will come to.)

He gently gripped his fingers, and released them, not letting Oriana realize this. Maybe it was caused by the devastation of his insides, Tsuchimikado's movements were as stiff as a puppet. Though in a real battle, he couldn't use his full powers…it was also bad when he fell onto the ground because of carelessness. One could sense anxiety in his calm and collected thought process.

Even so,

(How can I…)

Tsuchimikado rubbed away the blood flowing out from his eyes, and looked in front.

(…retreat now?)

He exerted some pressure on his fingers that were slightly uncoordinated.

(In order to chase Oriana, Stiyl got hit by an interception spell. Because of the Anglican Church, Kami-yan got involved in numerous unexpected calamities.)

He clenched his fist.

(So how can I retreat? I, who lured them onto the battlefield, how can I fall back now!? Even if the situation isn't advantageous, even if my entire body's covered in blood, it's alright. I can't let the goodwill of those idiots who assisted this traitor to go to waste!!)

A burning passion was in these eyes covered by those sunglasses.

“…Fallere825——The back-stabbing blade. Remember this. This is my magic name.”

Hearing this, a slight smile appeared on Oriana’s lips.

As a fellow magician, she knew the determination of the man who announced his name.

“Hoho, then it’s disrespectful for this nee-chan to not say her own name.”

Oriana’s eyes revealed a serious expression.

It was her nature as a magician.

“My name is Basis104——The one who carries the foundation stone.…Now that I’ve declared it, I have to win. This complete introduction should be proper manners for your determination.”

Tsuchimikado didn’t reply.

Oriana didn’t say anything either.

It seemed that starting the battle early would be the greatest respect to the ‘enemy’.

The two magicians instantly clashed with each other.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu covered the distance of 10 meters at one go, making the distance between them become 0.

During this time, Oriana Thomson placed a flashcard inside her mouth, and bit onto it.

Out of mid-air, thick ropes appeared on her arms. The ropes entangled with each other, and like a net commonly used in an obstacle race, wrapped around her arms.

Just as Oriana was about to use that net, Tsuchimikado swung his fist forward first.

He thought that his right fist would be blocked first, and thus faked his punch to the chest, and then when the opponent was stuck, he would swing in a left hook to break through the wrist that was used for defense. At the same time, he'd stamp onto Oriana's foot with his sole. This was a tactic that was used for immediately disabling the enemy's limbs, and removing all their mobility.

But,

Oriana seemed to realize his intentions as she moved her right foot that was about to be stepped on back. She used her arm to block Tsuchimikado's first punch, and using the instability caused by the punch and her stepping back, she fell backwards and increased the distance.

The left hook that Tsuchimikado intended to break Oriana's wrist missed.

Her back on the ground, Oriana swung her right hand that was covered with ropes.

A gust of wind was caused.

In that net that was formed by many ropes, like bubbles being blown, the sound of air could be heard.

However, appearing this time wasn't soapy bubbles, but sharp blades that could cut rock.

"!!"

The blades, totaling about 20, flew towards Tsuchimikado.

Facing this volley of blades that was fanning out like a shotgun, Tsuchimikado moved sideways and got onto the ground. Several pillars behind him were knocked down, and the lights on the ceiling were dropping towards him. The wall and the ads posted on it were ripped apart, and the marble floor looked like it was farmed.

Tsuchimikado didn't get up, his four limbs still on the ground, as he leapt towards Oriana like a beast. If it was close range, this could shorten the time needed to get up and run.

“Haha, this nee-chan doesn’t hate such a wild, youthful presence!!”

Her back on the ground, Oriana could not dodge, but she gave a kick towards the approaching Tsuchimikado. Tsuchimikado grabbed her foot with his right hand, his left hand onto her calf. As long as he could twist the ankle into a right angle, he would get the upper hand.

“Ho!!”

Tsuchimikado inhaled, ready to twist the ankle.

Just as Oriana was about to be controlled completely, with her ankle as the pivot, she turned her body around, and with her free leg, slammed it from the side into Tsuchimikado’s face like a hammer.

“GYA…ahhhh!!”

Tsuchimikado’s body rolled hard to the left.

Oriana got up and tore another flashcard with her teeth.

From her hands, an intangible force was released, moving towards Tsuchimikado. Tsuchimikado corrected his body posture while rotating and jumped up, his back slamming hard into the wall. A weird cracking sound could be heard from his body, and Tsuchimikado could taste blood.

(Damn…it!)

Tsuchimikado continued to jump aside, dodging the array of light bullets that Oriana was shooting at him. The white balls that were as large as basketballs exploded upon touching the walls.

Tsuchimikado again felt that shockwaves from the explosions, as he slammed into the floor.

Tsuchimikado, who was on the ground, slowly got up.

He wiped the blood on his lips with his hands.

(Though it’s only a bit, my movements…are really slow…if it was the normal

me, I would have broken a few bones of the enemy…!)

“Hn? You're not using magic for a magician. Is this your style? Well, I don’t particularly care how people play their game, but at this rate, you—will—die.”

Oriana seemed to look uninterested as she placed the flashcard near her soft lips.

“If this is your real ability, then you won’t be able to escape the next hit. If this is how far your determination goes when you declared your magic name, this nee-chan won’t want to play with you anymore.”

She seemed to be sighing that the outcome was a bit too fast.

It was like spending lots of time studying to prepare for an exam, only to find the questions too easy. It seemed like all her efforts were wasted.

“…To expect outside help at this time, it’s a bit stupid. This nee-chan has already set up a tactic to divert forces. Right now, this underground street is protected by a boundary. Nobody would think of approaching this place, and won’t find anything strange. News of whatever that happens inside won’t reach outside. Not only can it hide magic flows and magic movement, even the sixth sense, on the occasion that it works, will respond rather slowly — even a professional magician won’t approach this place so easily.”

(…)

Hearing these words, Tsuchimikado looked up.

He felt that those words weren’t right, but what? Even if there were some contradictions, a slow mind wouldn’t be able to pick up, that was just what the enemy said. Maybe it was some wrong information to scare him or shake him up.

“So you’ll be defeated here. I’ll let you regret declaring your magic name to this nee-chan with this level of determination,” she said.

Oriana Thomson bit onto another flashcard.

It was like pulling the plug off a grenade.

(…What now?)

Oriana’s flashcard fell onto the ground.

(Seeing how injured I am now, I won’t be able to take it the next time I cast magic. But, even if I want to use the Red Spell, there’s no time to chant it!)

While the flashcard landed on the ground, at the same time, a giant mallet suddenly appeared from the ground beside Oriana. The pentagonal-type mallet was about a meter thick as it rushed towards the ceiling.

(If this is how it is, in this situation, if I want to deal the biggest blow to Oriana…! Damn it, I have to hurry! Got to hurry!)

Tsuchimikado grabbed a colored piece of paper from his blood-stained uniform.

With machinery-like speed, he folded up the wrinkled piece of paper.

“Damn bastards accustomed to peace! Wake up if you wish not to die!! (Everything begins from this signal! Follow the light and sharp noise!!)”

“Too late.”

The moment Oriana said this, the giant mallet broke apart like an ice sculpture.

This storm that had billions of shrapnel seemed like it was about to bury the road as it headed towards Tsuchimikado. It was like it was going to swallow this small human called Tsuchimikado Motoharu, stuff it into a main cannon, and fire it.

The sound of insects moving about could be heard later.

(I have to make i—)

Just before Tsuchimikado could send his request,

This metal tsunami that destroyed everything rushed forward, all the way to the end.

# Part 4

The entire road was destroyed.

From where Oriana was standing, all the pillars to the end of the passage were destroyed. Seemed like those pillars were just decorations, as in reality, they were not used to support the ceiling. Well, at least it removed the danger of collapsing the ceiling. The walls, the ceiling, all the decorations on the floor, were ripped apart like a gift package, and even the materials on the ground looked like they had been ploughed through. In front of her, there was no flat surface at all. The ground was all fragmented and the sprinkler hoses in the peeled ceiling were all damaged; water was flowing out like a faucet being completely open.

"…"

Oriana stared at the devastation that she had caused.

(I damaged a surveillance camera? Security's going to be tighter from now on.)

The opposing magician seemed to have dodged into the blind corner of a pillar, and lowered his body to avoid further damage. However, this level of dodging wasn't going to prevent him from getting hurt. On the back of Tsuchimikado, who was sprawled on the floor, there were 4 metal pieces pierced into his body. Each piece of shrapnel, that were several centimeters long each, were as sharp as a knife. Several pieces of rubble from the damaged pillars had also slammed into his body, and each of these concrete slabs were as big as a honey dew.

"It's over, huh?"

Oriana would normally keep the number of sacrifices she made to a minimum and quickly leave the scene, but it was different for a magician who had declared his own magic name. In Oriana's mind, a magic name was what kept a magician alive; ignoring it was the biggest insult to a magician. Whether it was done to her, or when she did it to others.

Thus, Oriana didn’t like it.

Even though she knew that she had to remove the danger in the shortest time possible and get away from it, even though she didn’t like to go all out, she was still unsatisfied now that victory was so easily decided.

(Should I deactivate the boundary I set around here and get away? Though nee-chan likes to leave some finishing touches.)

Interrupting her hasty thoughts and coming to a conclusion, Oriana looked around. If she wanted to remove this boundary, she’d have to use some sort of a code to deactivate it, and let the unstable ‘original’ self-destruct.

However,

“…?”

Oriana revealed a surprised look. Though it was just the twitching of eyebrows, such a change was enough for her to reveal her inner thoughts.

The boundary had been removed.

Oriana Thomson hadn’t given any commands at all.

(What’s going on? Though it’s unstable, it’s still an ‘original’. There’s no magical interference, so it can’t be destroyed at all. Or, have his allies arrived…?)

Oriana moved to the front and back entrances to check, but there was no one there. A destroyed boundary would mean that the owner of the destroyed boundary would know that it was destroyed. As there was no way for anyone to use surprise attacks, when the boundary was destroyed, one would normally use a blitz attack.

The puzzled look on Oriana’s face became even more obvious.

She suddenly thought of a possibility.

“Don…don’t tell me…”

Her movements suddenly froze, and then she turned around.

She was staring at the magician on the ground that had four pieces of shrapnel pierced into him. He was still the same as before, but Oriana suddenly spotted something.

Tsuchimikado, who was sprawled on the ground, had a blood-red paper-folded bird beside his hand.

(At that critical moment, he seemed to be setting up some sort of spell…maybe he wanted to destroy the barrier? But why? Facing such a hit just now, why didn't he defend, but do that sort of thing…?)

Destroying the barrier wouldn't result in Oriana's defeat, as that was just a countermeasure.

That meant…his aim was…

"Seems like…it's a spell…that I can break."

Oriana was shocked by that voice.

That 'enemy' that was definitely buried together with his magic name wasn't dead.

"I can't really see it…you can endure this strenuous exercise, huh?"

Oriana refused to admit defeat. Hearing this, the enemy magician on the ground slightly moved his lips, and smiled.

It was like he wanted to smile to show that he was alive.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu moved these lips that were bloodied, and happily said,

"Oriana Thomson, didn't you say that in this boundary, 'nobody from the outside will know what happens inside?' I'll be troubled if that's the case."

"What…"

Oriana suddenly realized something.

Since it was an enemy one couldn’t defeat, then what would the person think of first? Of course one would call for allies.

Realizing what the enemy was thinking, the tension on her shoulders disappeared.

It was a tad too sad to rely on this.

“Idiot. Aren’t those comrades of yours those two that are chasing after this nee-chan? Those two don’t have any real threat. Even if those two work together, I won’t even be gasping for breath.”

“I’m not referring to them.”

“What?”

Oriana couldn’t help but ask back.

Right now, there were only three direct enemies that she could see.

“You’re really an idiot. We’re representing the Anglican Church, the religious power of a country. Think, would there be only three members? If so, isn’t your mind a bit too simple and peaceful? They might as well go wash their hands in the golden basin of the magical world and go sell flowers? Just think, how many Necessarius members are there? For us who’re supposed to be hiding our identity, how can we let the National authorities, who are living such a peaceful life that they’re almost stupid, realize this?”

This wasn’t true, Oriana concluded.

Oriana hadn’t come to sightsee, so she hadn’t checked the schedule of Daihaseisai, but she had checked with Lidvia before, and thus she knew there was a delicate balance of power between the science side, which had Academy City as center, and the magic side.

Academy City, especially during Daihaseisai, couldn’t possibly let in too many magicians who belonged to the same organization. If they did so, the relations between the science side and the magic side would worsen.

The plan this time was to aim between the crack in relations between these two

sides, and set up the Croce di Pietro. Thus, she couldn't possibly believe the exception that Tsuchimikado was talking about, especially for the Anglican Church, which was supposed to be in charge of the magic side's security.

Thus, Oriana could respond with confidence.

But she didn't completely know it — caring about Tsuchimikado's words showed that there was some sense of insecurity.

"If it's true, this nee-chan would be troubled. But this is impossible. The Anglican Church and Academy City won't allow this sort of stupid thing to happen."

"Why would we need their permission?"

"…"

"You forgot my magic name? I should have asked you to memorize it. I'm the back-stabber; which side am I backstabbing in the first place? The state of the Anglican Church? The state of Academy City? So what? You think that my mind is so peaceful and stupid that I'll ignore the minor details and let victory run away?"

Oriana felt that there was a rather irritating silence surrounding her.

She slowly exhaled.

"I can do anything just to get the victory. I can do anything just to hide in the darkness. As long as I can sneak onto the enemy, I'll think of anything to get the victory no matter what. Watch it, Oriana Thomson. As long as I am willing, I can defend against all these metal shrapnel no matter how many are they. However, I won't be able to get my victory like this, so I used a bigger trump card. That's all."

"…You think that I'll believe this bluff? If you had plenty of comrades, why would you be working alone? When you used that searching magic, you should have gotten more people to protect you, right? Even if this wasn't the case, at least two people would be working together."

"If you like to talk, then I'll accompany you for that. To me, I can gain some

time like this. When the boundary was broken, I'd already sent the message. It won't take long for the enemy to get here. Because that person is serious, that person will not hesitate to declare her magic name just to prevent someone from dying."

Tsuchimikado extended out that blood-stained arm that was resting on the ground just now.

There was a simple piece of paper in his hand.

It was a piece of paper that was shaped like a talisman that's sold at a shrine. In the middle, there were Eastern words written in a straight line. Instead of saying it was written in ink, it looked like the words had been formed by burning the paper.

"'**Tsukebumi Tamazusa**' – on first look, it looks like some sort of Shinto talisman, but in terms of Onmyodo, it's actually a cursed tool. This causes someone far away to hallucinate, creating internal conflict inside the person…if I reduce the power, it can be used in peaceful ways. That's…"

"Don't tell me that it's a communication spell?"

"Bingo. This thing is made into a bag-shaped thing, and inside it is a wooden piece with somebody's name on it. Very classical, eh?"

Tsuchimikado grinned,

"Come to think of it, in this situation, who would be my most likely contact?"

He slowly said.

Though he was covered in blood, it was like he was blackmailing his prey.

"It wouldn't be fine if the thing you're transporting is the 'Stab Sword'. Since we know that it's not that, we can let that person join in the battle without any hesitation. Or should we say, since there's no 'Stab Sword', there's no need for that person to remain on standby. Besides, that person's greatest weakness is gone."

Oriana's throat unknowingly dried up.

She had heard of it before.

In the Anglican Necessarius department, out of the less than 20 Saints in the world, there was a Saint among them. She had tremendous power, and would swing her sword to prevent anyone from dying. Oriana Thomson was originally a British citizen, and her main base of operations was in England, so she knew about the Saints. Once she met a Saint, she'd lose; it was said that only a real god or angel could beat those monsters.

"That's right, it's Kanzaki Kaori."

The glow in Oriana Thomson's eyes became sharp.

She licked her dry lips.

"Since I know that you have the Croce di Pietro and not the Stab Sword, you shouldn't be surprised when you consider the scale of this situation, huh? Kanzaki was a central character in the conflict between the Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Amakusas ten days ago. Isn't it possible that she's still staying in Japan? Also, there are people that Kanzaki is familiar with living in Academy City. She can be seen as a special guest, and even if news leaks out, there won't be a problem."

Tsuchimikado added on,

"You should know, Kanzaki owes a debt of grace to me. Think about it, when she first came to England, who was the one who took care of her? Of course a fellow Japanese would be suitable. To me, it's a rather trivial matter. But that person is rather sensitive about this sort of thing. If she knows that something like this is happening, she'll immediately rush over."

(Cheh…)

Oriana started to make her own calculations.

Seeing Oriana like this, Tsuchimikado seemed to treat her like an idiot, and continued,

"Oh my. Don't tell me that you intend to destroy the 'Tsukebumi Tamazusa'. Let me tell you, that's impossible. This thing is like an alarm, once it sends the

signal, it’s over.”

Saying this, Tsuchimikado seemed like he wanted to prove that it wasn’t a hoax, as he pinched on his own hand-made talisman that he used as a communicator.

“…”

Oriana slightly adjusted her breathing.

Right now, she couldn’t tell whether ‘Kanzaki Kaori’ would come here or not. Even if that Saint was to arrive, Oriana didn’t think that she’d lose. As long as she could set up an effective strategy, ready to sacrifice her limbs, she could probably kill one or two Saints in battle. But this wasn’t appropriate. Compared to a simple one on one battle, Oriana Thomson had to achieve a higher goal and not hurt anyone else.

(If so,)

Anyway, she chose to kill Tsuchimikado, who was using the searching magic, and got out of here quickly.

“Hoo!!”

Tsuchimikado, who was on the floor, squeezed his last ounce of strength, pulled a bar away from the rubble, and threw it onto the devastated floor. The gray dust was floating around like curtains.

Visibility had become zero.

“!”

Oriana suddenly moved towards where Tsuchimikado had fallen, and stamped onto the ground hard like she was going to break her ankle.

However, she could only feel the hardness of the floor.

(He intends to buy some time!? Why must he work so hard…)

To this point, there was no ‘anyway’ now. The enemy could still fight, though it was somewhat troublesome to make a comeback in this dust. From the looks of

things, Oriana had to spend quite some time before she could even kill Tsuchimikado. In other words, there were only two options.

If she assumed that Kanzaki Kaori wouldn't arrive, she'd take her time to beat Tsuchimikado down.

If she assumed that Kanzaki Kaori would arrive, she'd abandon Tsuchimikado and quickly get the heck out of there.

The dust in front of her could be dispersed by a flashcard. But if this was to end up being the signal that began the battle, she'd have to stay behind and fight until Tsuchimikado died.

It was not that Oriana didn't know what to choose.

It was that she would regret whichever option she chose.

(Anyway, this nee-chan has already destroyed the searching spell, my objective. It's not worth it if I get injured because I was fighting against this troublesome boy…)

Oriana Thomson pulled her tongue back and ran to the exit of the subway.

If his words were true, the Saint of the Anglican Church, Kanzaki Kaori, would join in the battle. Oriana thought that if this was so, she should have made use of the rumor that it was the 'Stab Sword' even more. If she could set up a strategy, she might have been able to beat the Saint, but a Saint was not someone who could be taken down without taking damage.

Of course,

She didn't want to admit defeat.

"She…"

Left behind and alone in the damaged subway, Tsuchimikado muttered. When Oriana left, he checked to see whether the enemy had left behind any flashcard spell.

The dust had scattered.

Tsuchimikado was sprawled where Oriana had first done her flying kick. Now heavily injured, even if she was to use all her strength, he could only move this distance. In other words, he removed the visibility of the enemy, using it to cause anxiety in Oriana, causing her to be unable to ‘confirm it calmly,’ and barely escaped from this predicament.

“I can use the communication spell ‘Tsukebumi Tamazusa’ and summon Kanzaki Kaori when I’m in trouble, huh?”

Tsuchimikado blankly stared at the ceiling.

He moved his lips, mocking himself,

“It’d be great if this sort of thing really existed nya…”

Of course there wouldn’t be any reinforcements. The only people who were chasing after Oriana and Lidvia were all in Academy City, Tsuchimikado, Stiyl and Kamijou, only the three of them.

He looked at the folded paper talisman that he made.

“This talisman and spiritual item, ‘Tsukebumi Tamazusa’—forget about Onmyodo, it doesn’t even exist in the world.” Tsuchimikado concluded that Oriana wasn’t versed in Eastern magic, so he just folded a piece of paper. Of course, there was no magical meaning behind it, and there was no wood piece that had Kanzaki’s name on it.

(‘Tsukebumi’ and ‘Tamazusa’ have the meaning of a ‘love-letter’…it’s really like a curse anyway, being seriously in love is like being cursed nya.)

Before this, Stiyl had mentioned dejectedly that ‘I have no knowledge on Eastern magic at all, so I can’t do it by myself.’ To think that it’d come in use now.

In other words, Tsuchimikado gambled on the possibility that ‘Oriana wasn’t familiar with the incantations of Onmyodo,’ so he just confidently showed her a piece of paper that had kanji written on it.

But,

(If the enemy believes it, at least they'll proceed slowly with their actions, but they probably won't delay it. It'll be great if I can get my revenge…)

Tsuchimikado was lying on the ground as he looked at the devastated subway.

(The magic circle is destroyed, the flashcard is gone, and even my phone's split. Now, how can I do my recovery nya… To be honest, I can't activate the 'All-Around Reality Circle' again.)

He wanted to get up, but his entire body was aching really badly.

He was hurting so badly that he wanted to roll on the floor, only to realize that he didn't even have the energy to do so.

His body was so cold, yet so heavy.

Even if he breathed, he might not breathe in oxygen successfully.

"First…"

Tsuchimikado thought about the power that existed within him as a member of Academy City.

Level 0 Auto-Rebirth.

It was a self-recovery process that created a film on vascular ruptures.

"…With such a broken up body, I have to think of an idea nya…?"

## Part 5

Tsuchimikado Motoharu finally called. Because the number was different, Stiyl

was suspicious at first when he saw the screen. He seemed to be calling using a new phone.

Hearing Tsuchimikado's words, he had definitely been attacked by Oriana. In the end, his phone and the spell 'All-Around Reality Circle' were both destroyed. Right now, his body condition was such that he couldn't use magic twice consecutively. Most importantly, Oriana's flashcard that was needed for the 'All-Around Reality Circle' had been destroyed.

"…"

Though Tsuchimikado said 'I'm alright,' if he was really alright, the magic circle wouldn't have been destroyed so completely. And upon hearing Tsuchimikado's weak voice, one could sense his pain.

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth,

"Then, what do we do next? If we can't use the 'All-Around Reality Circle', we've basically no idea what to do now."

"About this nya…but, I do know…that Oriana is acting carefully now, and will want to erase any doubt in her heart. 'Anyway', she might keep her distance from us. Bluffing…seems to be rather effective nya. Now, she won't be walking. I guess she should be taking an auto-bus that has a fixed route, or an underground train, a tram, a monorail…anything that can get her to the end point straight away…"

His breathing was rather shallow, as his voice continued on and off.

"Right now, Tsuchimikado's in this subway…"

Kamijou flipped through the tour guidebook of Daihaseisai.

It was the map of District 5. The nearest underground passageway to Tsuchimikado was still the underground station. They had to get onto the line that went from District 5 to District 7.

"…Since there's no other lead, we can only check on this. If we know which ride Oriana's taking, we might be able to carry out our search with a better method…"

“It’s because we don’t know about this that’s making this troublesome for us. Anyway, let’s go, Stiyl.”

“Nya…I’ll also…sneak in and check on security…if the enemy is anxious, so careful that she’ll check the security cameras…it’ll be great nya.”

The trio said what they wanted to say, and the line was cut.

Oriana Thomson was on an underground train.

(If I get onto this train…)

This underground line moved from District 5 to District 7. The distance wasn’t long, and if she wanted to gain some distance, she’d have to switch to an auto-bus later.

(Should I run far away? Or should I wait and see? Or should I set some traps and wait for the response?)

Oriana’s mind continued to think of several solutions. Though it was troublesome, if ‘Kanzaki Kaori’ really took part in this battle, she’d likely get hit back if she was not careful.

(Until a good countermeasure appears, I wish I have the time and a place to think of this carefully.)

Through the windows, there was nothing to see in this underground setting. Oriana sucked her tongue.

After a while, she finally reached the end of the line, the entrance to District 7.

When the auto-doors opened, she sprinted out onto the platform, ran up the stairs that led to the surface, slid her ticket into the ticket gate, and dashed out of the station.

Her next destination was the auto-bus station that was somewhat far away from here.

The sports day atmosphere of Academy City was still prevalent. There were

many people around, families with children holding balloons, elderly couples there to see their grandchildren, everyone looked like nobody was hurt. But Oriana's mind wasn't peaceful enough to confirm that she was safe just like this.

She had to follow a special procedure to confirm whether there was an assassin.

(Hm, I don't have to mind about it if I'm so easily tricked by that guy. But this is really irritating. I really want to get this over with.)

She looked around and walked into a lane that was a bit far from the road. Because this was a combination of tall buildings and narrow streets, though the weather was fine outside, sunlight couldn't shine in, and may even cause people to feel chilly.

Right now, Oriana's intention was to walk into an alley that no one was in to confirm whether there were any assassins after her.

Of course, if the assassin was to follow Oriana into the alley, he'd be alerting his presence to her. Thus, the assassin would have to work hard, like contacting several allies to set an ambush at the exit of the alley, or activate a spell that had a surveillance effect. Oriana wanted to look for those minor 'action signals' that the assassin may show, and check whether she was being followed.

(Hm, though we're basically tricking each other, I'll have think of new tricks if my actions are revealed. Isn't this too troublesome?)

Like Oriana, the assassin may purposely send a fake 'action signal'. The idea would be to make her think that she got away, and catch her when she was off guard. As a courier in the magical world, chasing after people, as well as being chased, it was a response that she was very familiar with.

No matter what, even with the tiniest movement, as long as there was a response, it meant that someone was following her.

She exhaled.

(It's going to take some time for the preparation of the Croce di Pietro to be complete. What should I do? Hm, it's much more interesting to think of ways to counter Kanzaki's spells. But then, in this situation, what's the point of 'getting one over' that Saint? Should she run away, should she hide…or should she go

and bury the opponent?)

As Oriana was thinking of this, she overlooked something.

There was a fork with an even smaller path on the road.

Somebody was walking out from the path.

“Himegami, we’ll be late if we don’t take a shortcut—YA!!”

“!”

Both sides collided with each other.

The petite girl that was like a primary school student jumped back after knocking into Oriana’s abdomen, only to knock into a black-haired PE attire clad girl that was moving backwards.

Oriana immediately got ready to tear a flashcard, but she held onto it. The one who knocked into Oriana was a 135cm tall girl who was wearing a cheerleading uniform.

Because of the impact caused by the cheerleader girl, the plastic cup that originally had fruit juice in it was knocked out of the black-haired girl’s cup. With a soft ‘wa’ sound, it landed on her hair. The fluid that wet her shirt dripped onto the petite girl’s head.

“Komoe-sensei, you really like to look for trouble.”

“So…sorry! But sensei is all drenched herself! Ah, this lady, are you alright?”

The drenched cheerleader girl looked up at Oriana, looking slightly worried as she asked.

(Magician reinforcements…maybe not.)

From the attire and actions of the girls, Oriana simply hypothesized.

She revealed her normal smile.

“Ah, this nee-chan is alright, I’m more worried about you instead. It’ll be rather

exciting if you're to walk on the streets like that."

"Ah! Himegami-chan's drenched as well."

"Komoe-sensei too. Something pointy is on your chest."

Komoe-sensei frantically covered her flat chest with both hands. Seeing Komoe-sensei blush, the black-haired girl again looked at her chest.

At this moment, Oriana saw it.

The chest of the black-haired girl.

The short-sleeved T-shirt was now transparent, thanks to the fruit juice that had been splashed on her. One could see that she was wearing a pink based green butterfly knotted bra.

However, she was not concerned about that.

On the inside of her PE attire, there was something else. The thin chain hanging around her neck looked like a necklace. That chain was in her PE attire. Fastened at the bottom of the chain was a large, silver…

—Celtic Cross that was refined by the Anglican Church.

Oriana didn't know what that Cross did.

She also didn't know what abilities that black-haired girl had.

In this situation, she only knew one thing.

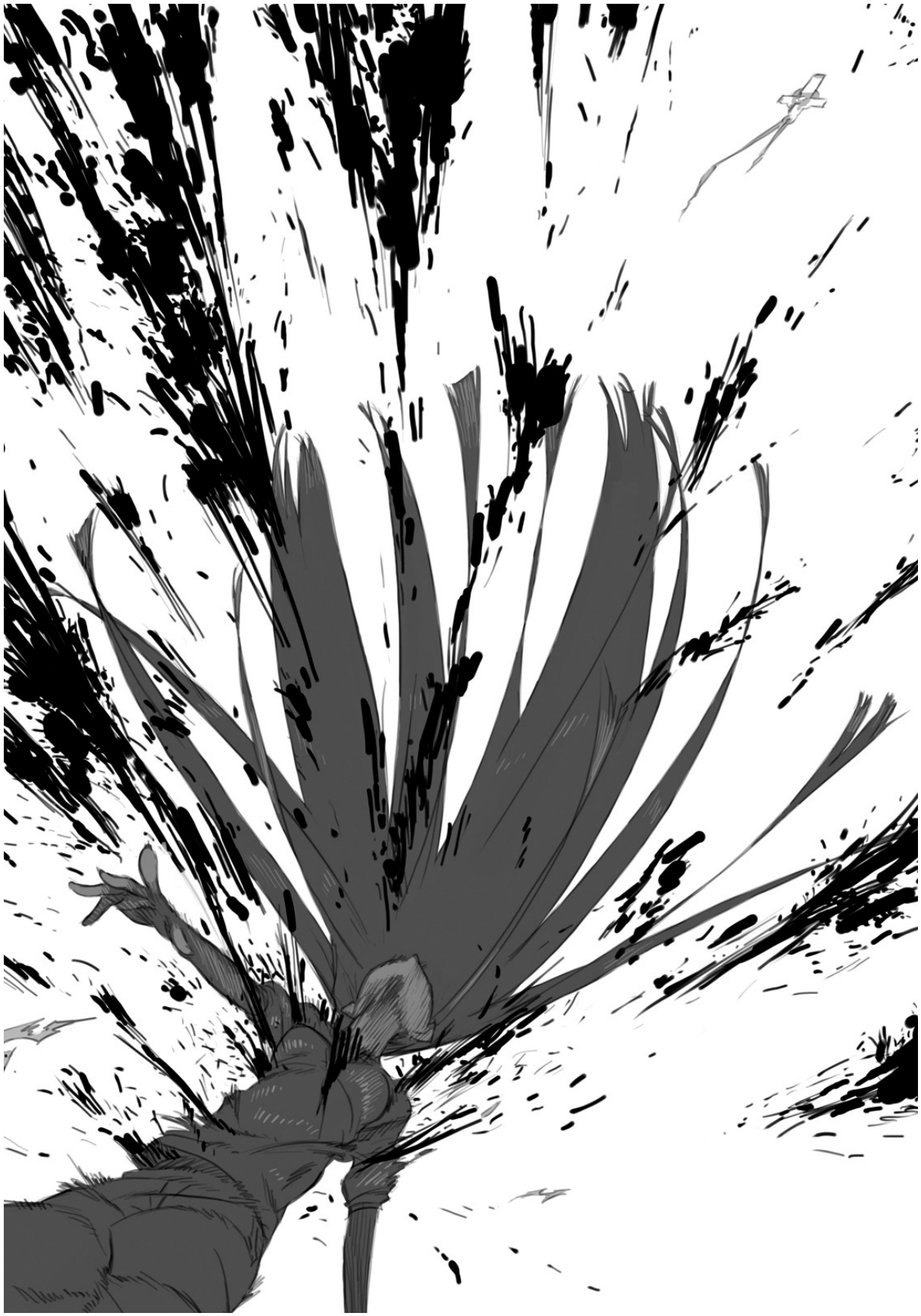
(A magician from Necessarius!?)

In Academy City, there might be counterfeit Crosses being sold as decorations. Some children may wear Cross earrings and necklaces without understanding the meaning behind it. Thus the Cross itself wasn't rare.

But,

It would not be strange if it was from the world renowned Roman Catholic Church, but for the Anglican Cross to exist in Japan, where a church didn't even

exist, that was another topic in itself. To specially import it from England, the circumstances should be abnormal. Normally, ordinary people didn’t possess some sort of spiritual barrier. Besides, the name of that barrier was—



(The Anglicans'…Walking Church!? To think that she has the same type of defensive mechanism as that Index Librorum Prohibitorum? This monster—!!)

Her hands immediately geared into action.

Oriana put a flashcard that was sealed by the thin metal ring near her mouth. She bit it and tore it down in one go. The red words 'Soil Symbol' appeared on the paper, as the unstable grimoire 'original' started to activate its magic.

BOOM!!

A blunt explosion could be heard.

## Part 6

Kamijou and Stiyl got out of the underground station, and onto the surface.

On the bustling streets, there was no sign that the heat would dissipate soon. Kamijou wiped the sweat off his forehead, hastily looking at the Daihaseisai tour guidebook.

"…The nearest interchange from here is…an auto-bus terminal 300 meters north."

"300 meters…?"

Stiyl pulled out a cigarette and answered bitterly.

"The next bus will arrive in 10 minutes time! We can make it if we rush there!"

Both of them exclaimed as they got into the crowd. There was a seven minute distance between them and Oriana, the situation was extremely urgent.

“If possible, I hope that we can at least capture Oriana. We have absolutely nothing on Lidvia Lorenzetti!”

Stiyl passed through the space as he looked forward.

Though their destination was 300 meters ahead, the road in front extended to both left sides and right, and the buildings blocked their view.

On the side of the crosswalk, a green pedestrian signal continued to flicker. Kamijou and Stiyl dashed over to the other side of the road.

There were many more people on this road than as compared to before.

The rows and rows of buildings looked like a giant wall; if they wanted to get to the bus stop, they’d have to walk through a small gap between some buildings. If not, they had to go in a roundabout way.

Kamijou and Stiyl started to look for a gap between the buildings as they continued to run on the extremely crowded road.

“You said that there are no clues, are there really none? Weren’t you on the phone with someone when we were at the park just now!?”

“Ah, that’s from London. I requested some people from the British Library to check something for me.”

Looking around, they couldn’t find the entrance of the alley. Compared to running in a straight line, the actual distance could be surprisingly long. It’d be great if Oriana was in a similar position.

“Are they looking for information about the Croce di Pietro?”

At this moment, Kamijou saw a crowd gathering somewhere.

“Yeah. But…the progress isn’t very successful because there’s too little information. Right now, we only know that keeping the Croce di Pietro would require a security vault, sealed windows, two doors and no light is allowed in… that’s all we know.”

Stiyl puffed out the cigarette smoke from his mouth.

“Just like that?”

Kamijou ran towards the crowd.

Stiyl answered back,

“Don’t anger me. Later…damn it.”

Stiyl suddenly coughed. It shouldn’t be due to running, but due to him smoking quite often.

“It’s too troublesome to explain it. Tell me your mail address, I’ll send Orsola’s e-mail to you. You can read it when you have the time.”

To think that Stiyl and Orsola actually used e-mails…Kamijou was impressed as he gave his e-mail address to Stiyl. Come to think of it, wouldn’t Index, who couldn’t even use electronics, be the strange one?

Kamijou continued to run as he looked at the text that was sent to him.

“Vi riporto qua le informazioni che ha trovato nella Biblioteca Britannica…”

(Who…who can even read it!!?)

Seeing this wall of text on the screen, it seemed to be a language other than English, but he couldn’t tell. Let’s ask Tsuchimikado later, Kamijou thought as he closed the screen.

Stiyl, who was running behind him, irritatedly said,

“Cheh, forget about the grammar and language. Just grasp a rough idea of the pronunciation…don’t read it if you can’t, it’s nothing major anyway.”

“…Never mind, basically, we’re in quite a predicament, huh. Damn it.”

“That’s right, this is why we have to find Oriana Thomson in order to get our lead. Just like this— eh?”

Stiyl frowned as he ran.

He looked at the crowd in front. They were blocking them, with a group of

students at the center. Their gazes weren't facing Oriana, but at a dark alley that was away from the road.

"That seems to be the alley that we're looking for…I have a bad feeling about this."

"What?"

Facing this surprised Kamijou, Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth.

"It's the scent. This is a bad scent. When a certain group of people are nervous and excited, the feelings will spread out like smell. And this…is the scent of someone seeing fresh red blood."

Hearing such terrifying words, Kamijou's hairs started to stand.

In this to-and-fro situation, Kamijou and Stiyl reached the back of the crowd. They then reached the crowd, where some of them were straightening their backs to see what was going on, and some were even jumping.

(What…?)

Kamijou frowned. Right now, he didn't have time to confirm it. He half-forced his way past the human wall and tried to get into the dark alley.

At this moment, on the other side of the human wall, there was an unexpected voice.

"PLEASE…PLEASE MOVE ASIDE! EVERYONE, PLEASE MAKE WAY! HIMEGAMI-CHAN? ARE YOU ALRIGHT, HIMEGAMI-CHAN!!?"

"MOVE ASIDE!!"

Kamijou suddenly rushed into the crowd, and arrived at the front. Most of the crowd moved aside, and though there was a rather angry atmosphere, Kamijou ignored this as he moved to the front.

Kamijou didn't slow down as he ran into the dark alley.

What he saw…

It was blood.

It was a narrow alley.

Because of the combinations of tall and short buildings, it was supposed to be daytime, but the sunlight couldn't shine in. The damp road looked dark, and there was a stagnant flow of smell.

This dark alley

Was dyed another crimson red.

"Ka…Kamijou-chan!!"

The familiar voice belonged to Komoe-sensei.

But, those small hands, and that soft face, and the sleeveless cheerleading vest and miniskirt, they were all dyed a crimson red. Tears rolled down from her large eyes, mixed with the blood and rolled down to her chin.

But it was not her blood.

There was a girl lying beside Komoe-sensei. The black haired girl, Himegami Aisa, was lying in a pool of blood. Compared to the fresh red blood, her face and limbs had gone pale green.

The top half of her shirt was tattered.

She was bandaged up at the top. From the collarbone, to the top of her navel… every part of it was wrapped. To an amateur, it was pretty well done, but the seeping fluid continued to dye the bandage red. The originally smooth curve of the girl seemed a bit uneven now.

"…!!"

Kamijou wanted to know the reason, but he immediately regretted it.

Amongst the pool of blood, there was a piece of flesh with skin attached that was like a boiled egg that was failed to be peeled.

Himegami remained motionless.

Maybe he was thinking too much, as he could still hear light breathing.

Kamijou felt a strong impact in his head.

He saw it before.

This feeling.

It was the same feeling as when Accelerator was attacking the Sisters.

“Why, how…Himegami, she…? Sensei, what happened! Who did it!?”

“I…I don’t know.”

Komoe-sensei, who was still trembling, looked over here.

“Sen…sensei knocked into a woman around here…then sensei did apologize to her. That person smiled as she also forgave me. But suddenly, her face looked very terrifying, in an instant…Himegami-chan…!”

“It’s Oriana, right?”

Stiyl shook away his extremely long cigarette, and in annoyance, pressed it against the wall.

“To do this in this situation, there’s a high chance that it’s her…that person, she’ll really do things that are despicable.”

“Why?”

Kamijou looked confused,

“Why did she do this? She has no reason to attack Himegami! Himegami has nothing to do with this!!”

“It’s that.”

Stiyl pointed at the floor with his cigarette.

In the pool of blood, there was a blood-stained Cross. That was a little boundary that the Anglican Church had sent over as a decoration for her to wear in order to

seal off her Deep Blood ability.

“This ‘walking church’ spiritual item is a special tool that was also given to me, Tsuchimikado and Kanzaki. Seeing this, it’s not weird for Oriana to assume her to be a magician of importance that’s of the same level as Index Librorum Prohibitorum. In Academy City, where science is the main subject, it’s strange itself to have an Anglican spiritual item. Oriana must have thought that there were strong pursuers chasing after her, so she wanted to take the pre-emptive.”

Kamijou knew what this meant, as his facial muscles started to twitch.

“She…made a mistake…?”

His throat bobbled strangely.

“Just…like that? She’ll go to this extent, and land Himegami in this state; the reason is…she made a mistake?…Th…at…she…what the hell—!!”

Kamijou couldn’t help but hammer hard into the wall. Now still crying, Komoe-sensei’s shoulders inadvertently trembled.

Stiyl looked bored as he exhaled, and pulled out some runes from his coat. After tossing them, the cards stuck on the wall like there were magnets on it.

“TPIMIMSPFT (Let this place be hidden).”

Saying this, the crowd that was blocking the dark alley now moved back onto the road like a plug being pulled out.

This should be Stiyl’s people clearing field.

“To carry out such emergency procedures, you probably called for an ambulance. If so, it’s better to wait at the entrance of the alley. If you’re to keep staying here, the paramedics won’t be able to see you. But at least it’s better than letting the bystanders stand around here.”

In order to chase Oriana, Stiyl headed into the inside of the dark alley. If she wanted to get to the bus stop through here, she’d continue to move forward.

Thus, Stiyl moved forward without hesitation.

He stepped past Himegami Aisa, who was lying in the pool of blood.

“HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!”

“What, what are you expecting now? Are you going to stay here and scream, or are you going to continue chasing after Oriana Thomson, and end this quickly?”

“It’s because of us that she got involved! How can we just leave Himegami behind without taking care of her?”

“Kamijou-chan!?”

Komoe-sensei looked up, speaking in a soft voice.

She was clearly one of the affected parties, but as nobody had told her what was going on, she couldn’t understand what they were saying.

“Then, what can you do?”

Stiyl stood beside Himegami, who was not moving at all, and stared straight at Kamijou’s face.

Then, he extended out his hand that had a ring on each finger.

“—STOP GETTING ALL HIGH AND MIGHTY, YOU AMATEUR!!”

He suddenly grabbed Kamijou’s hair and forcefully pulled it down. In front of Kamijou, was a girl lying in the pool of blood, breathing weakly.

“In front of this injured girl, what can an amateur like you do? Even a specialist like me can’t do anything, NOTHING! Will staying with her heal her up? Will grabbing her arm cause her pain to go away? If you believe so, fine, then do it, right in front of me! During this time, this cold and hard reality will only rob her of her strength! Right now, we can only chase Oriana! And if we are to do that, we have to step past her! If you’re not willing, then just stay here and mope all you want!!”

Stiyl roughly let go of Kamijou’s hair.

Kamijou took a few steps back.

“…You think that you’re the only one angry, Kamijou Touma? Anyone will feel something by just seeing this. Even if it’s Stiyl Magnus, he will feel it. The girl that I risked my life to save from ‘Misawa Cram School’ is now injured to such an extent; you think that I can remain calm!?”

Stiyl pointed his index finger, with the shiny ring on it, downwards.

“Step over it, Kamijou Touma. Step over her and chase after Oriana! This is our world. Terrible, isn’t it? We can’t treat this girl: this fact will not change. If you want to protect others, clench your fist. There’s a limit to what we can do in the first place. Your right hand has the ability to break illusions, since when did it have the ability to protect an illusion?”

“…Damn it.”

Kamijou lowered his face as his bangs blocked his view. He was gritting his teeth so hard that his molars were about to break.

In this hidden regret, was it directed at Oriana, or was it the fact that he couldn’t rebut back?

“That…bastard…!!”

Kamijou let out a roar that sounded like he was going to cry. Then, he lifted a leg, as that trembling leg was about to make a first step. Instead of staying behind to look after Himegami, he chose to chase after the escaping Oriana.

“__”

The magician, Stiyl Magnus, narrowed his eyes as he saw the ritual in front of him.

It was when Kamijou’s foot was about to step past Himegami Aisa’s body.

The priest saw it.

It was Tsukuyomi Komoe, who was slightly far away from Himegami Aisa, now drenched in blood.

Her hands, face, clothes, all dyed a crimson red thanks to the blood. Komoe-

sensei was sitting on the floor, not caring about her skirt or the ground, as her butt directly sat on the ground.

But, that wasn't the focus.

She slowly began to collect the surrounding pieces of rock and cans and stacked them up like she was playing with toy bricks, arranging them. But she was not placing them anyhow. It looked like a lame miniature model of the buildings.

"Wait a minute."

Stiyl suddenly said something.

Kamijou, who was about to take a step forward, lost his balance as he stepped backwards. Stiyl completely ignored him, as he just stared at Tsukuyomi Komoe's face.

"What…are you doing?"

"That time…"

The female who was only 135cm tall looked at the magician with her reddish eyes.

"…Didn't it work for Sister-chan the last time? So, this…this time…I… should…be able…to do it. The last time…Sister-chan…was slashed in the back, she was bleeding profusely. But…if sensei follows…what Sister-chan… instructed…"

"No way…"

Stiyl Magnus suddenly thought of it.

When that Index had first come to Academy City, Kanzaki Kaori had accidentally slashed Index in the back. Kamijou had carried that injured girl to Tsukuyomi Komoe's apartment.

But,

Index and Kamijou couldn't use magic. That was not a technical problem, but a

physical one. Then, the one who had used healing magic on Index was—

“Don’t tell me, it was you…?”

Stiyl said in a low voice that was full of surprise and respect.

The petite girl didn’t notice his transformation.

“…Before, everything was alright after I did this. Sensei…remembers it very clearly? I really…followed what…Sister-san…instructed…! Why? Why, isn’t Himegami healed…!? Himegami…just talked about the Night Parade, she wanted to go out with Kamijou. She checked the tour guidebook a few days ago. WHY…MUST THIS HAPPEN…!!”

Such an outcry wasn’t directed at anyone.

And Stiyl and Kamijou could only listen to her sobbing.

What Tsukuyomi Komoe was doing was a healing spell, one that required delicate mixing of a magician-made hakoniwa (Note: A hakoniwa is a miniature piece of art. It may be a miniature garden, a landscape or a bonsai. Places in a box or a basin.) to a fixed amount of space. By using this method, if one was to patch up a ragged doll, the person could heal an injured person. But, if one didn’t separate a fixed perimeter and just completed the ‘hakoniwa’, there wouldn’t be any effect. Not just in the physical sense, the caster had to consider the magic symbols and the way the Angel’s power was to flow in.

It wasn’t a simple process that any magician could do.

Even for Stiyl, who could flexibly control the runes and the Christianity, he could only heal burns.

Though it was a recovery spell, due to the differences in sects, rules and spells, just chanting the incantation wasn’t enough to heal. It was like how flu medicine was not going to heal a fracture: if one didn’t carry out the appropriate spell, it wouldn’t have any effect on the injured person.

Moreover, if they wanted to heal laceration, beatings, fractures, and internal injuries, they needed a specialized caster. If there was a person with knowledge that was of Index’s level, maybe even an amateur could do it. But such a

condition may be too unique.

Like he expected, Tsukuyomi Komoe's spell wasn't complete.

Of course, it was a different case when she had been instructed by Index to activate the magic spell. But for this kind of 'hakoniwa' that was made when she just learned a bit of, it was a bit too loose, and there were no magical symbols at all. This was expected, as Komoe-sensei, who was from the science side, didn't understand how the spell works in theory.

But, she had called an ambulance.

And she did all the emergency procedures that she could do.

Tsukuyomi Komoe tried every single method that she could think of, but there was no effect at all. In the end, she had to seek help from the 'magic' that she had no knowledge of.

She may not know how outrageous this thing that she did was.

She may also not know that she was betting on such a lousy contraption.

Even so, she was just doing it for…

A girl in front of her who she wanted to save.

"Damn it…"

Stiyl Magnus inadvertently looked away.

This female called Tsukuyomi Komoe was very similar to a certain girl.

A petite figure, extremely naïve, one who got angry for others sake, one who cried for others sake, one who had magical knowledge, but was unable to use magic, that crying look when she got dyed in other people's blood.

Stiyl felt this unhappiness in his heart as he couldn't help but narrow his eyes.

He inhaled, and tossed the cigarette aside.

"—Nope, it's not like that."

Eh?

Tsukuyomi Komoe looked up.

Stiyl pulled out several rune cards that had complicated symbols on them from his pitch-black coat.

“Like using a bucket to store seawater, first, we have to set the ‘hakoniwa’ area. Also, it’s too little to just think of an angel. We have to set where the angel is to come in, and where is it going to stay. You just need to imagine it. We’re not really summoning an angel that has wings, we just need some sort of force.”

He immediately bent down.

Facing Himegami, who was wrapped in bandages and could only let out feeble breathing.

He faced the girl who he had just stepped over.

“Kamijou Touma, go and chase after Oriana.”

“What?”

“I’ll tell you Tsuchimikado’s new number. Even without me around, it’ll be troublesome if you can’t contact him.”

“Wait a sec. That means…you’ll…”

“Don’t expect too much. I’m pretty much an amateur in this aspect.”

The magician, Stiyl Magnus, said unhappily.

“I can only heal burns; loss of blood and fractures will require another type of spell. Also, this is a territory which I’ve never stepped into before. To heal such a serious injury…even those that specialises in surgery may not be able to do this…”

But he continued,

“…This person seems to know something that’s part of Index’s knowledge. I’ll

borrow some knowledge from her to confirm this theory. I can't even memorise Tsuchimikado's 'All-Around Reality Circle' and 'Divination Circle'. To be honest, I'm a little worried…but we can still gain some time before we send her to the hospital. After this, we can only hope for a highly-skilled doctor to heal her."

"Eh, ah…?"

Tsukuyomi Komoe forcefully rubbed her eyes.

Seeing her like this, Stiyl couldn't help but look away.

"Wait till my instructions are over, then get to the road to call the paramedics in. Kamijou Touma, you go ahead and chase after Oriana. If even you stay behind, that right hand contraption of yours will destroy this healing spell completely. When this is over, I'll immediately talk…let me repeat this again, if you want to settle all these, hurry up and get out of here."

"…Got it."

Kamijou stared at Himegami's face, her body lying in the pool of blood.

He then exerted some strength into the five fingers of his right hand.

"I will, if this will solve everything. So Stiyl, I'm leaving Himegami to you."

"I should have said it before, but don't expect too much."

Stiyl heavily exhaled as he said this.

He then said in an extremely irritated tone.

"I'm not used to this either. In this world, I wish that I could use magic that's not used for attacking others."

## Between the lines 5

(Why…)

Himegami Aisa was lying on the icy floor as she silently thought.

(Why…did it…end up like this?)

In the afternoon of this cruel September heat, only this alley was so cold that it penetrated the skin. Maybe it was because the sun was unable to shine in here all year long. The walls and what was on the ground, everything looked black.

She knew that her pulse was still beating.

The top of her chest to the bottom of her abdomen exploded.

The pain was at the point of saturation, such that she started to get numb. Thus, she looked around, and on seeing the blood that flew out and the scraps of skin and flesh, her thoughts were about to cause her head to explode.

But,

The even painful truth was in front of her.

The two boys were beside her. In this blurred vision of hers, they seemed to be arguing.

“—STOP GETTING ALL HIGH AND MIGHTY, YOU AMATEUR!!”

A voice that saddened people.

Even so, there was a sense of resilience in this voice.

“In front of this injured girl, what can an amateur like you do?”

*You can,* Himegami wanted to say.

But her lips were dry, and her voice couldn’t come out.

“Even a specialist like me can’t do anything, NOTHING!”

These words hurt the other boy.

Every time she heard this, she knew how twisted the young man's face was.

"Will staying with her heal her up? Will grabbing her arm cause her pain to go away?"

*It's alright*, she wanted to say.

Her wounds may not be healed, her pain may not subside. But, she could say this, that this didn't mean that there wasn't any effect, not so.

"During this time, this cold and hard reality will only rob her of her strength!"

*Why?* Himegami thought.

Why must this world be so cruel?

She just needed to deny it. The boy didn't need to give such a hurt expression.

Her lips couldn't open.

Her tongue couldn't move.

Her throat couldn't even make a sound.

The two boys seemed to be arguing over something, or more accurately, one side was attacking the other. This was a form of verbal violence. Every word that was said, the boy's face looked hurt, like his feelings were skinned off him.

She didn't want to see that expression.

To be honest, she wanted to be with him. It didn't necessarily need to be only two people. She wanted to take part in the matches together with everyone, to cheer for her friends together, to shop together, to go for the Night Parade together, to create happy memories together, to laugh happily together.

This was just what she wanted.

"…let me repeat this again, if you want to settle all these, hurry up and get out of here."

*No*, Himegami wanted to say.

“…Got it.”

*No, don’t*, she wanted to say, but she couldn’t let her voice out.

“I will, if this will solve everything.”

After this, the boy stepped over her body and ran into the alley. She was unable to convey her words, as the other person, back facing her, was running further and further away from her.

Why must this world be so cruel?

No matter how hard she prayed for it earnestly, her request wouldn’t be granted. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t make any voice. From the beginning till the end, all her hopes were taken away by the world—

“I’m sorry, Himegami.”

Even so, she heard something.

“Before the Night Parade begins, I’ll visit your room, so just wait for me there.”

At this moment, she felt that she was smiling now.

# Chapter 7: The Foe Who Should Be Beaten, The Person Who Should Be Protected. *Parabolic_Antenna.*

## Part 1

“DAMN IT…!!”

Because of what was in front of him, Kamijou Touma couldn’t help but shout out.

There was no one left at the bus stop.

Right now, it was 3:30 PM, as the heat of this hot day began to weaken. There was only a simple tin-roofed bus stop there, all alone, facing the road. There was no one sitting on the bench, no one queuing up. The surrounding people weren’t looking at the bus-stop, like how they would treat a lost child standing there.

“Ha.”

The situation in front of him made him laugh weakly.

Kamijou just stood there.

On both sides of the road, there was no sign of any auto-bus, and there were no clues as well. Forget about which bus Oriana took, he was not even clear if she had taken the bus from this bus stop.

At first, if they couldn’t catch Oriana in three minutes, she would escape.

They had wasted quite some time when Himegami was attacked. By calculating the distance and time, one knew that they couldn’t catch up to Oriana.

In terms of common knowledge, this was to be expected.

But,

(That Oriana, where did she run off to…!!?)

Facing this reality, Kamijou couldn't help but feel giddy. No matter how he swore, what kinds of thoughts he had, a desire that couldn't be attained meant that it couldn't be attained. Though not everything could go a person's way, such a simple fact shot Kamijou down.

He couldn't catch up to Oriana anymore.

As for Lidvia, there was not even half of a single clue on her.

If this kept up, they couldn't prevent her from using the Croce di Pietro.

(What now?)

Kamijou pulled out his phone and dialed Tsuchimikado Motoharu's number. He pressed the call button and waited for a few seconds. Tsuchimikado seemed to be waiting for a call, as he immediately answered it. Kamijou said straight away,

"Sorry, Tsuchimikado. I lost Oriana at the bus stop. Himegami got hit by one of her magic attacks, so I guess she's still around. Is there any way to check that out?"

"No…about this, it's a bit tough nya."

Tsuchimikado said in a weak voice,

"The 'All-Around Reality Circle' can only reach 3 kilometers in all directions. It won't be effective…from where I am now, and Stiyl can't set up the 'All-Around Reality Circle' on his own…right now, even if I take a bus to where Stiyl is, if Oriana's taking a bus…she'll be able to completely get away from the effective zone."

Then now what? Kamijou looked around.

There was still no clue.

“…Which line will Oriana most likely take, do you know nya?”

“I do.”

Kamijou was looking at the tour guidebook of Daihaseisai.

“…The route of this bus seems like it will loop around District 7, but I don’t know where Oriana will alight. Estimating the time that elapsed up till now, the bus should have passed through 4 stations, so she might still be taking the bus.”

“Oriana, she…should be trying her best to escape as far as she can…so, she’s most likely still on the bus.”

“But, there’s an underground train near the second stop, and the fourth stop is a terminal where other buses will stop at as well. She might change transportation somewhere.”

“…”

Tsuchimikado Motoharu became silent.

There were all sorts of people around Kamijou, students spending their free time eating some ice cream, spectators rushing to the next arena, parents being pestered by their children to buy them fruit juice. There were supposed to be all sorts of noises and footsteps around him…but Kamijou could only hear a silence.

Right now, they were in a fix.

They couldn’t predict Oriana’s movements.

Did she, or did she not take the auto-bus?

Basically, where was she headed to?

“…Wait a sec, Tsuchimikado?”

Kamijou lifted his head as he said in a low voice.

Hearing Kamijou say this, Tsuchimikado braced his wounded body and replied,

“What now…Kami-yan?”

“Let me ask you, why was Oriana on the streets just now?”

“Eh? That’s because…we were chasing her, so in order to escape—”

“No, I mean before that.”

Kamijou interrupted,

“The reason why this chase began was because I bumped into Oriana when I was with Fukiyose-san. Then, what’s Oriana’s purpose for walking over there?”

Kamijou slowly arranged his thoughts,

“If Oriana and Lidvia never intended to trade the Croce di Pietro, she can’t possibly be meeting up with someone on the streets. So, why was she on the streets? What’s her aim? Can’t she prevent herself from taking this kind of risk?”

“I see nya.”

Tsuchimikado’s voice indicated that he had recovered in strength.

“At least in the morning, Oriana didn’t…have the Croce di Pietro. Even so, she still took action…that means that she needs a reason to work alone.”

“What reason…?”

As Kamijou asked, Tsuchimikado seemed like he couldn’t endure the pain as he groaned.

“I don’t know nya…this, I have no idea about it. But…the Croce di Pietro hasn’t activated yet. The reason behind it…may be related to this. That Oriana, might she be…looking for the conditions to use the Croce di Pietro…”

The conditions, Tsuchimikado said,

This was something that the magicians felt may be a clue in leading them to Oriana. Before knowing the answer, because Tsuchimikado had been using the security facilities of Academy City to look for Oriana, because they had an advantage when pursuing her, they had delayed it all the way till now…

“The searching criteria…? In other words, one can’t use it without a special environment? Oriana must be moving around to look for that condition.”

“…To sneak into Academy City without any assurance…and now they’re hastily looking for the condition now? This might be a bit strange…of all times, in this critical juncture, Stiyl just had to turn off his phone!”

Now that Tsuchimikado mentioned it, Kamijou remembered that Stiyl was exchanging information with some people from Academy City. Stiyl did mention it before…

“Oh yeah, that guy said it before, about a storage room for the Croce di Pietro.”

“What? Kami-yan, even if it’s trivial…it’s alright, just tell me what you know in detail.”

“Okay, seems like the work in London isn’t proceeding smoothly. Right now, we know that the windows of the storage room are sealed, and there are two doors.”

“Hmmm…two doors…? Like those in the airtight labs?”

“…No, what are they like?”

Kamijou slightly nodded his head.

“Ah, that’s right, it seems the purpose is to prevent light from shining on it.”

“Light huh…the Croce di Pietro is a powerful spiritual item, maybe they don’t want to activate it accidentally nya…”

Tsuchimikado remained quiet.

One could hear him breathing lightly, probably because his breathing was irregular.

Such a silence meant that he was seriously thinking about this.

This silence, one formed when Tsuchimikado tried not to make a sound, stimulated Kamijou’s nerves even more. The sweat flowing down his face wrinkled it, as he began to ponder as well. A security vault, conditions of using

it, two doors, and a room with no windows. To prevent light from shining in, that meant that light was…

“Will there be a problem once that Croce di Pietro touches light?”

“…I don’t think so…if so, there’s no need to care about the location and time, right? Even now…the sun is still up. If they only need this to activate the Croce di Pietro…they would have done it right from the beginning. If it’s such a simple thing, they only need to forcefully invade Academy City…and use the Croce di Pietro before being captured…wouldn’t that be enough? It’s like a game of kicking the can…but, if the spiritual item activates…because of some form of light, I guess it’s possible… About 2,000 years ago, Christianity at that time… before it was segregated into Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism, there were quite a few…spells that used light. The baptism center has 3 windows, and using the light shining in, three sorts of light are formed. This represented…the Trinity nya.”

“Then, what does it have to do with the light that’s required to activate it…?”

Kamijou raised this doubt that was floating in his head. Tsuchimikado didn’t answer; he probably didn’t know either.

“Say, Kami-yan…is that…all the information that you have?”

“Just these…”

Kamijou put his phone near his ear as he pondered. The magic topic that Stiyl talked about wasn’t in his field of work. If he could memorize it, he could say it out immediately without understanding the principles, but there were many things that he couldn’t memorize. Even so, he was trying to force out what he remembered.

“Ah!…There is.”

“What?”

“That Stiyl said that it’s too troublesome to explain it, so he sent Orsola’s email report into my phone.”

“…The contents?”

The heat in Tsuchimikado's voice lowered.

"Sorry, I can't read it since it's in foreign language. Can you read it if I send it over?"

"How would I know if…you don't send it over nya? What foreign language are you talking about? It's not in English?"

Tsuchimikado informed Kamijou of his new mail address. Kamijou cut the line and opened his mail, forwarding the mail that Stiyl had sent him to Tsuchimikado.

Two minutes later, Kamijou's phone again indicated an incoming call.

"Kami-yan, anyway…I've read the report. This is…Italian, they didn't turn these words into a magical code."

"…Then, what's the content about?"

"This seems to be…after arranging the British Library…miscellaneous records, just ordinary stuff. The security vault of the Croce di Pietro…will organize…a biannual…cleaning. This record seems to be a record…that some of the security members recorded during the cleaning nya."

In the mail, there were several rules regarding the cleaning.

First, they had to clean it on a certain day.

Second, they had to do it in the daytime.

"Well…it's not major information."

"Wait a sec, Tsuchimikado. Read that mail again."

Kamijou kept the cell phone at his ear for a while. It was a while before Tsuchimikado spoke.

"Daytime? Not nighttime? That's strange, they already used two doors to prevent light from shining in. Isn't daytime even brighter?"

"Seems like…it's not just that."

Tsuchimikado said that there was something written on the back of the report.

In practicality, such a rule was rather ambiguous, according to this guard's report, even if the guards forgot to clean it in the day, they wouldn't clean it at night. He'd say 'everything will be done tomorrow morning' and go home.

"This inspector's report, seems…it isn't appropriate to say that the attitude of the guard isn't good nya. Also, while they were working…there seem to be a few people who were…playing with astrology horoscope. Damn it…it's not really some important information after all. The…content of this is about the guard grumbling."

Kamijou felt that there was something fishy with this report.

"…The Croce di Pietro is a rather important artifact of the Roman Catholic Church, right?"

"That's right nya…and because of this, to these people, it's a Holy item that they might even weep…or even kneel down in front of."

"Then normally, would they let others take care of it so easily?"

"Hm. I also feel that those guys…wouldn't just anyhow leave it. The keeper of the Croce di Pietro seems to be some sort of elite group…the record of the inspector, he's just away for a while…so he can only…write such a record. What's going on?"

"…"

"During the case of The Book of the Law…though the decoding failed, Orsola Aquinas'…information analysis…the level of danger…was such that the whole…Roman Catholic Church felt it was too dangerous. Though Stiyl seems to think that it's nothing, since Orsola…would choose this to be the report, it may mean that…there's some discrepancies in it nya…"

"Seems like it."

Kamijou replied to Tsuchimikado, thinking carefully about the events that had happened up till now.

The windows of the security vault were removed, and there were two doors for the entrance to completely prevent light from shining in.

Even so, the cleaners carried out their cleaning only in the daytime, and not in the nighttime.

And the report even said, the guards who forgot to clean it up didn't do it at night, but said that he'd do it the next day, and went home.

In other words, the main point was—

"Tsuchimikado, regarding the light's that's supposed to activate the Croce di Pietro, is it a light that only appears at night, and not in the day? Because from the actions of the guard, even if he ignored the first rule that 'they had to clean it on a certain day,' he had to abide by the regulation of 'they had to do it in the daytime,' right?"

Between these two rules, even if they were to remove one, they had to put the other as priority. In it, there must be a reason why they had to put the other rule as the priority.

"Hm…it's not unreasonable…nya."

Tsuchimikado's words weren't clear as he said,

"But, that night light…what can it be? Can it be…moonlight? Like, a full moon…if it can be activated on a certain phase of the moon period…if it's this sort of condition, the moon cycle and the date on the calendar…would be different. Even if they have already decided it…the date will differ because of the moon cycle, so they can't decide on a…'safe date'."

Tsuchimikado's suggestion was that if it used 'moonlight', which was unrelated to the moon phase, there was no need to strictly set a day for cleaning. Like, Easter or Christmas. They could just do it by choosing a certain day.

He concluded, since there was a need to choose a date, there must be some sort of religious meaning behind it. In this situation, the date would be closely related to the conditions needed to be fulfilled in order to activate the Croce di Pietro.

"…A night's light…huh?"

Kamijou held onto his cell phone with one hand as he sunk deep into thought.

(It's not that Oriana didn't intend to use the Croce di Pietro, but they can't use it.)

Kamijou arranged all the information that he had in his head.

(They have to use a certain sort of light if they want to use the Croce di Pietro.)

A fact that he had witnessed himself, and Stiyl's information from the British Library, and then Tsuchimikado's assumptions. He reconsidered these carefully.

(It's not a day's light, but a night's light.)

Kamijou stared at the wall of the building. There were many electronic bulletins that were formed by lights.

(No, that's not right. Since it's something that was available several thousand years ago, it shouldn't be something like a light bulb or LED, it's something that only this night scene has.)

His eyes moved away from the bulletin.

(A naturally occurring light…)

He held onto the cell phone with one hand as he sunk deeper into his own thoughts.

(Also, it's a light that related to the calendar…)

Kamijou Touma seemed to realize it as he looked up at the sky hovering over Academy City.

Tsuchimikado had mentioned this when he read Orsola's report a while back.

The keepers of the Croce di Pietro weren't serious.

A lot of them were playing with astrology.

But,

What if the astrology was important?

“Maybe—a constellation?”

“This…is rather likely nya…”

Tsuchimikado seemed to nod his head as he remained silent for a while, and said,

“A spiritual item…that uses constellations, isn’t rare…a constellation spell is the basic of the basics, the summoning of an angel needs to match the constellation of the season.”

Tsuchimikado added on that compared to the moon cycle, which is based on a month, a constellation is based on a year. For example, if a ‘Spring’s Constellation’ was the key to activating the Croce di Pietro, they had to clean it up in a season with an ‘Autumn’s Constellation’. Just like this, they could easily mark down a ‘safe date’ on the calendar.

“This means that the guards…didn’t have bad attitude…they might be…using the constellation to collect…all the required information for their work nya…”

Tsuchimikado seemed to agree with this, but just something like this wasn’t very clear.

Thus, Kamijou honestly asked,

“A force is required to activate the Croce di Pietro, but to use it, what’s the type to be used?”

“Basically…it uses 12 ecliptic, 28 north days, and 48 south, a total of…88 constellations, one of which is required to use the magic. In other words…in this situation, the ecliptic Aries and Scorpio do not have any power on their own…the stars that are arranged in a constellation, though they look very close…the distance is somewhat far huh? To include each and every single one of them…it’s rather difficult.”

“…Is it really like this?”

Though he wasn’t familiar with constellations, Kamijou knew that it was

something that people believed in several thousand years ago. There was a way to calculate the distance between the stars? To be honest, could anyone accurately recognize the structure of the universe in that time?

As Kamijou raised his doubt.

“That’s why they have to use that, Kami-yan.”

“What?”

“The old universe…no, we basically call it the sky…everyone thought that…this sky…surrounds the Earth like a giant dish plate…well, this feels like a celestial chart…nya?”

Tsuchimikado continued,

“…The magic of a constellation, uses such a celestial chart…it’s unrelated to the actual power of a star or the distance. This is something that displays this fixed picture…that appears…on this night sky…into a magic circle. The picture itself is very simple, but that’s…a large-scale force. The picture itself isn’t complicated, so it can normally be used on several spells…but such a useful spell…there shouldn’t be a lot of them nya.”

Tsuchimikado said that when they were at the seaside resort, the night sky when the archangel called the ‘Power of God’ was used to develop this constellation magic, ‘a sky that’s beneficial to the caster.’ Kamijou couldn’t accurately tell how large scale the spells were that required the use of a constellation in the magic side. However, it was a shock for him now that he knew that this spell was somewhat related to the spells that angels used.

“Then, that Oriana…”

“These…may be the possible conditions that’s required to activate the Croce di Pietro. Because they need to gather the light of the night…onto…that Cross on the ground, and to accomplish that objective, they have to set up some sort of antenna to absorb the night’s light, and then use the link…required for the spell to be activated. The reason why Oriana was running around on the streets…was probably because she was…looking for the best place to establish this antenna.”

Tsuchimikado said that not all spells that used stars followed this rule. Like for

example, on the last day of Kamijou's summer holidays, the Spear of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli that the Aztec magician had used. That kind of magic that used the power of Venus had nothing to do with the night, it just heavily relied on Venus' actual position.

But, the Croce di Pietro probably didn't follow the same rule, because if it did, Oriana didn't need to find an opportunity. If it could use a certain light source like sunlight, they could have quickly activated the Croce di Pietro and dominated Academy City quickly.

Thus, the Croce di Pietro was likely to be a spiritual item that used the 'appearance of a constellation,' a picture of it.

The reason why Oriana was moving about was because she was looking for a place where she could use the appearance of the constellation. Even so, what was her reason for walking around the streets? Was it that the places that she had checked up till now weren't suitable for activating the Croce di Pietro, or was she looking for the most suitable place?

"…However, for Oriana to really intend on…using the power of the Constellation…to activate the Croce di Pietro…this is rather likely…"

Tsuchimikado said as he ended his explanation.

"'This is rather likely'? What do you mean by that?"

"This assumption…though rather solid, has a few…contradictions that need to be solved nya."

What would that be? Kamijou frowned.

Tsuchimikado said directly,

"Listen carefully, Kami-yan…the so-called Croce di Pietro is something…highly related to Peter… one of the Twelve Apostles…of the 'original Church' that the Son of God created when he died. Of course, the Romans…used this power to create the Roman Catholic Church, and the event that caused this to happen… was 'Peter's death', or something after that."

Tsuchimikado said that Peter was executed during the late 1st century A.D.,

Emperor Constantine first recognized Christianity with the completion of St. Peter's Basilica in the early 4th century, and the Frankish king gave up the land in the 8th century. The time between these events was rather long.

Even so, it was after Peter's death that people first erected 'a Cross to commemorate Peter,' and stated that 'this land is Peter's inheritance,' which led to a long road that ended up with 2 billion believers forming the nucleus of the Roman Catholic Church.

"About this, the Croce di Pietro was originally a Cross that's set up on a grave. It should be something that was completed before some certain Cathedral was built. What's wrong with this?"

"The date to use the Croce di Pietro…and the constellation are important, I agree with these two points. But…Peter died…on the 29th of June. It's a different season, the sky is also different…you should have heard of…the summer and winter constellations, right? Also, because of the latitude and longitude…one will see different constellations in Japan's sky as compared to the Vatican. The Vatican's sky on 29th June…is different from Japan's sky in late September. If they can't solve this problem, it's impossible for them to use the constellations nya…"

In other words, during this season, they couldn't use the Croce di Pietro?

Kamijou slightly frowned.

"But, what would happen if they don't care about the season and use the Croce di Pietro?"

"Kami-yan, think about it…we use a direct current for our shavers…what would happen if we use alternating current instead?"

"…"

"I don't know to what extent will this thing…be destroyed, but at least…they can't successfully execute their plan. If not for this, wouldn't it be meaningless for them…to specially these important…'conditions of usage' nya?"

"…Then, why would they bring in a spiritual item that they can't use…?"

“I don’t know nya…there may be a condition…to overcome this nya. Damn it, there’s not enough time to…think about this properly.”

Time.

Now that it was mentioned, Kamijou re-realized the restrictions.

“Assuming if Oriana and Lidvia are waiting for the constellations to appear in the night because they want to use the Croce di Pietro, the restriction of activating it is still sunset, right?”

“It’s not immediate. According to the constellations, we may see it clearly only when the stars from the first to third class can be seen. Right now, the time…”

Maybe it was because this call was very long, the time was about to reach 4 PM. The sunset of the end of September was normally just before 7 PM. Because the first star would shine before sunset, according to the situation, it would be extremely difficult if they operated after 6 PM.

In other words, they had to find Oriana in the next two to three hours. No, the Croce di Pietro may not be in Oriana’s hands. In this situation, they could only force Oriana to spit out Lidvia’s whereabouts and catch her.

There wasn’t much time.

There was no guarantee that they could catch Oriana at all, and on top of that, they had to find Lidvia.

“I feel that we’re lacking the decisive blow… anyway, let’s get to work. I’m moving…along where Oriana went by, looking for a common point in this constellations spell…if we’re successful…maybe we can know where Oriana’s targeting…”

“Wait…wait a sec! You’re okay if you take action in this condition?”

“In this…situation? …Kami-yan, what kind of condition do you think I’m in now?”

Tsuchimikado pretended to be calm as he said this.

On the other side of the call, on the screen now, was an idiot who was still talking despite all his injuries. Besides magic, Tsuchimikado had Auto-Rebirth, but that was a Level 0 ability. Though it was better than nothing, it wasn’t an ability that could remove wounds like an eraser.

Kamijou intended to say something, but he knew that it was useless to talk about anything right now.

“…I know. Then, what do I have to do during this time?”

Just as Tsuchimikado was about to propose something.

A different voice came from behind Kamijou,

“…Touma, what are you doing here?”

## Part 2

The auto bus was at an auto bus stop.

Like the other passengers around her, Oriana Thomson glanced around.

This wasn’t an ordinary parking for passengers to alight and board the bus. As the bus was too heavy, the AI controlling the bus had immediately come to a halt. It seemed that as there were already so many people on the bus, and yet there were other people boarding it, the bus had reached its limit.

A female voice came from the audio speakers on the bus. It seemed to be pre-recorded, as there was no sense of any emotion in the voice.

"This bus will now stop due to safety concerns, we're sorry for this inconvenience—"

Basically, they weren’t informed on how to settle this problem. If no one was

getting off the bus, the overweight situation wouldn't be solved. However, it would be a different case altogether if someone was willing to give up his own baggage.

Oriana decided to get off the bus.

From the comfort of the cooling air-conditioning to the asphalt road.

Instead of staying in the bus, not knowing when it could move, it might be better to go off and look for other methods of transport.

She then walked onto the street. There may have been an arena nearby, as there were many people around. The surrounding stalls were also selling stuff used for cheering, like megaphones and round fans.

Oriana was completely unable to see what was behind the bus stop.

(So now, it's seems that Kanzaki Kaori isn't coming.)

She gently sighed.

(Now that I've confirmed that no one else is pursuing me, the card that's to be specially used against a Saint can't be used. That card doesn't seem to be effective against normal magicians…so who's going to satisfy my thirst of battle? Never mind. I'll probably face off against a Saint in this long life.)

At this moment, Oriana thought of the black-haired girl whose upper body had been badly damaged, the female student whose flesh had been destroyed together with the hidden Cross.

(…)

Oriana looked at the stack of flashcards in her hand.

She bitterly tore a flashcard and activated a communicating spell. This was a spell that transmitted a person's thoughts to another, as Oriana sent over a certain scene that was etched in her mind.

"Lidvia."

“I know what you want to say.”

The other party was Lidvia Lorenzetti.

But what Oriana heard wasn’t an interrupted way of speaking.

“The girl that you took care of was just an ordinary person.”

This interrupted tone.

Bang! Oriana kicked hard at the ground.

Though she knew that doing so would attract a lot of attention, it seemed to have been done on reflex.

(Not just once, to misfire twice…!!)

This icy tone reverberated through Oriana, who was gritting her teeth.

“There was a name and photo in the report regarding the Alchemist incident. Her name is Himegami Aisa, and though she has an important power, she’s not a magician. That Celtic Cross is used to seal a unique power, and is just a spiritual item that was given by another magician, there’s no offensive capability at all. In order to avoid a misunderstanding, the Anglican Church once gave a formal report.”

The report about Kanzaki Kaori was really a bluff. And, to think that girl who she mistook as an enemy had nothing to do with the Anglican Church.

“…The worst scenario.”

“It’s really the worst scenario. We have laid hands on someone who’s completely unrelated to this incident, and twice to boot. Though the reason for the first time was due to other magicians getting involved, we’re fully responsible this time.”

Lidvia said in a firm voice.

“We have taken action against those we should be protecting.”

This was truly the voice of a nun who evangelized to others who didn’t know about Christianity.

“The people we should extend out our hands to aren’t Saints who have great morals, but sinners who are lost and need redemption. This is what the Son of God said to Matthew, the tax collector who was hated by everyone else, when he ate with him. We have defied this rule. Do you know what this means?”

“…”

Oriana remained silent.

Lidvia’s words weren’t interrupted, as there was no sense of hesitation in these words. From the beginning to the end, that was a voice that followed the decision of the Bible, and a voice that allowed no interruption. Also—

“We can’t make a second mistake again. For these people whom we have hurt, we have to be extra careful, and use the Croce di Pietro to take over Academy City.”

There was no sense of hesitation in her tone.

No matter the amount of downsides, she had to turn all these into positives.

Lidvia Lorenzetti continued on with this kind of feeling.

She was reflecting on it, and at the same time, regretting it.

Lidvia should be in even more emotional pain than Oriana.

But she would use this pain as food for progress. She understood the meaning of the word ‘training’, and no matter how painful it was, she would use this chance to increase her pace.

Thus, Oriana wouldn’t stop.

From birth till death, she wouldn’t stop.

Oriana felt a chill flowing down her backbone.

Not because of the difference in power, but because of the ‘difference’ in ideals.

“Really…?”

Then, Oriana asked this nun who was not the least swayed.

“…Thus, everything would be successful, right? All the problems would be solved as long as we take in Academy City, right?”

## Part 3

“Touma, what are you doing here?”

Kamijou was shocked.

He frantically turned around, and in front of him was Index, clad in cheerleading attire. She was holding pompons in both hands, and the calico cat that was surrounded by them seemed to hate the plastic plush feel, as it continued to struggle.

She slightly inclined her head.

Her head was tilted, but her eyebrows were twitching, indicating that she was angry.

(Damn it…! Our school…will be competing in the arena nearby!?)

Outside Academy City, there were many magicians waiting. They were of different nationalities and organizations. And these magicians had set up a magic sensing spell around Index that was of a 1 km radius.

Once the magic sensing spell sensed some form of magical power, they would immediately enter Academy City.

And among these people, not all of them would have eliminating Oriana and Lidvia as their priority. People against Academy City would use this chance to do all sorts of sabotage work.

“Touma, why aren’t you with those classmates from your ‘class’? Everyone was looking for you, and now everyone is heading out towards the next ‘arena’.”

Index seemed to be looking for something as she said this.

“It felt like you were still involved in the matches this morning, but you weren’t around in the afternoon. Why?”

Though Index was speaking in a somewhat lecturing tone, she was lacking her usual excitement and energy.

The girl’s innocent look...

Revealed an expression that made one wonder whether it was a good thing or a bad thing.

It might have come from Kamijou’s experience of butting into other people’s affairs.

(That Oriana seems to have gotten far away. There doesn’t seem to be any bus stop nearby!?)

Kamijou continued to think as he wished that his target, Oriana, had gotten far away. Right now, he was anxious because of these conflicting thoughts.

“…”

On the other side of the phone call, Tsuchimikado was also silently waiting for the situation to develop. Kamijou saw that there was no auto-bus stop on the road in front and beyond of him.

“Say, Touma, where have Aisa and Komoe gone? Weren’t they with you?”

Hearing Index’s voice, Kamijou couldn’t help but freeze up.

(That’s right, Stiyl and Komoe-sensei are using magic to heal Himegami…!?)

His actions were stiff.

There was only about a kilometer to that place. What to do now?

“Ah…ahhh, they heard that the committee members are lacking in manpower right now, so they went over to help out. That’s weird, I thought that they have already sent out an email to the class.”

“E-mail?”

“Mn, maybe it’s outside the perimeter. The electrowaves haven’t reached the center yet? Oh my, they haven’t checked how many cables are there…if it’s an ordinary store, there should be a relay base. Why? Though the news reported that having too many people contact each other at the same time during Daihaseisai will cause the cables to overload, the central processing ability should be increased at this point.”

“???”

Index, who was in this cheerleading attire, tilted her head.

Kamijou planned to smoke through using information about the Science world that Index was unfamiliar with, and it seemed to be working.

He shook the phone slightly in his hand.

“I’m using the phone now, Index. I’ll be back later, so just go back to where everyone else is. Ah—hello, hello? Is there anything strange going on over there?”

“No…there isn’t. There’s nothing strange going on outside, relax…”

Hearing this voice, Kamijou felt relieved.

Index slightly frowned when she saw Kamijou act like this.

“Touma, Touma. I heard that the next activity is something called a ‘group exercise’ (Note: the participants have to combine their limbs to perform several figures, and finally, build a human pyramid and get the most nimble person to get to the top of the pyramid to fling the ribbon in the person’s hand to end it). Can you come over?”

“…”

Kamijou paused for a while, and said,

“I’ll go. I need to settle some things that I have to help out with, so I will participate later. Can you wait for me, Index?”

He just said a promise that he could not fulfill.

“Nn.”

Index nodded her head without hesitation.

She hugged the calico cat that was surrounded by the pompons.

“I got it, Touma, you have to get over there. I’ll cheer for Touma, and will seriously follow the actions that Komoe taught me. You’ll be shocked.”

With that cheery face, Index turned her back on Kamijou. She continued forward, maybe towards the next arena. As she didn’t take a detour, and even ignored the food stalls around her, it seemed that she truly believed what Kamijou said.

Kamijou Touma couldn’t move as he watched her figure vanish. He waited till she disappeared before taking action. He closed his eyes, as if he was lowering his head and apologizing.

On the other side of the phone, Tsuchimikado said.

“…I’m sorry, Kami-yan.”

If Oriana and Lidvia had not arrived in this city, he should have been able to enjoy Daihaseisai together with his classmates. If Tsuchimikado and Stiyl hadn’t asked for his help, he might not have realized that something was going on, and may ended up going out with Index or Himegami. He was just an ordinary person. Even if a magician snuck in, he didn’t have to take part in the battle.

Kamijou thought of this possibility.

“No problem.”

He firmly declared.

“Smiling while not knowing anything is also something that’s unbearable. I don’t want you guys to be painfully stained in blood while Index and I are enjoying ourselves.”

That was right, Tsuchimikado himself could have enjoyed Daihaseisai. Even Stiyl could have come to Academy City aside from the reason that he had to battle as a magician.

They hadn’t brought misfortune.

Also, even if they had brought it, there was no need for them to run away.

“So, I was thinking. To selfishly push all the things that I hate onto Index…is really stupid. Because of this, I’m happy that I’m not willing to get her involved in this.”

“…”

Tsuchimikado Motoharu couldn’t say anything.

Basically, only Kamijou Touma was talking.

He was asking the other person to give him the privilege to decide what to do.

“Let’s settle these things and get back to Index. Everyone’s like an idiot, fooling around, eating and drinking, taking photos—and sinking into this wonderful memory.”

## Part 4

4:30 PM.

Using the bus stop where he lost Oriana Thomson as the center, Kamijou Touma looked around as if he was drawing a circle.

Of course, there was a high likelihood that Oriana had taken the auto-bus and got away. However, it was possible that she defied their expectations and chose not to take the bus. Since they couldn't track Oriana down using the offensive methods, and Kamijou couldn't find out about the methods of using the Croce di Pietro since his technical abilities were inadequate, he could only eliminate the possibilities of these ordinary methods.

The lead, Tsuchimikado, was analyzing Oriana's movements from a while back, trying to find out where the Croce di Pietro could be activated. Kamijou could only let a specialized magician handle it as he waited for the report.

Kamijou continued to run, his skin feeling the 4:30 PM air.

From noon to afternoon, the streets were still rather warm, but the feeling of the sun beating down on the skin was much gentler now. The only thing that hadn't changed was that Kamijou was running through the crowd that was heading towards shops, buying gifts, as well as towards the next arena. On the way, he could see someone with fluffy blond hair in the crowd.

(…!? No, no, that's not Oriana.)

As there were several students who dyed their hair, and there were also tourists from other countries, it was not uncommon to see people with blond hair.

In order not to block other people who were moving about, Kamijou went to the side of the road and stopped for a while.

(Oriana doesn't seem to be waiting for me to leave…however, this is the situation if she's not in the building.)

He thought as he looked up from the pavement. The windows of the towers that were of uneven height reflected sunlight.

(It's hard to look through everything in one go…but then, that's better than not doing anything at all. Alright, let's do it!)

Kamijou pat his face with both hands, and headed towards a tower near a large electronics store.

On the way…

“‘Wait a second,’ says Misaka as Misaka chases after and looks. ‘Misaka just wants to look at souvenirs, so don’t abandon me,’ says Misaka as Misaka tries to argue back but has no intention of stopping.”

He could hear a child’s voice.

Kamijou casually turned around, and among the crowd, he heard someone that he shouldn’t be seeing anywhere around here. It was like a child’s voice, and may be hiding among the crowd, but Misaka…? He thought about it for a while, but right now, there were more important things to do.

(Right now, Tsuchimikado is doing the main task. I can only silently cheer him on.)

He passed through the auto-door and looked around the spacious and bright store.

The air-conditioning was rather comfortable, and the store was sufficiently laminated. The feeling of sunlight beating down on his skin was also rather slow. Kamijou slowly looked around the store, checking whether Oriana was in the store, occasionally looking outside the large window panel.

The glaring sunlight was fading from the 4:30 PM sky. Though the sky wasn’t red yet, it felt that the blue color was becoming lighter. In an hour, it would be an evening sky.

Then the first star would twinkle.

Before the curtain of the night completely settled, the brightness of the constellation would probably reveal itself first.

“…If our estimate from a while back is correct, there’s only two hours left.”

Just as Kamijou sighed, the phone rang.

The display showed not Tsuchimikado’s name, but an unknown number.

He picked up the phone. It was from Stiyl Magnus.

“I asked Tsuchimikado what your number is, but I don’t intend to record it.”

Maybe Stiyl was smoking, as Kamijou could hear the sound of air puffing out.

“I’m done with that female student. Where are you right now?”

Kamijou’s breathing momentarily stopped.

He hastily gripped the phone tightly.

“!? How’s Himegami now!?”

“…It’ll be troublesome if you expect perfection from me. It’s a method that I’m unfamiliar with. One can’t possibly be successful the first time he uses a healing spell. To be honest, I don’t want to use that kind of spell again. I’m only using a layman’s knowledge as reference, carefully inspecting through these vague words to find the magical meaning behind it, and then recombining them to form a healing spell. Such an action is like walking on a tightrope. I was sweating over whether I’ll lose control of the spell, and even now, I’m crossing my fingers about it.”

Stiyl said unhappily.

For a man with such pride to say this, it meant that it was a really dangerous operation.

Kamijou felt that something heavy fell off his abdomen.

“Anyway, I’ve already strengthened her blood vessels, added blood in them, and eased her pain signals to get her away from her shock state. What’s next is the doctor’s job…the paramedics are rather confident, saying that in a nearby hospital, there’s a miracle doctor who can fulfill much more of his ability the more critical the situation is.”

It sounded embarrassing.

It was like a hooligan saving a cat on the roadside, and then caught in the act by an ordinary citizen.

“You…”

“Ah? What’s with this lifeless tone? I said it several times, I can’t possibly live

with you cheerfully…WAHH!!”

Dong!! An unbelievable voice came from the phone.

A voice besides Stiyl’s…

“Uuu! Sensei hasn’t thanked you yet! Uwahhh~!! If you weren’t here, Himegami…Himegami would have—!!”

“Stop…stop it!! Why are you hugging me and crying!! I never guaranteed that I could heal her. If we can’t restore her strength, she’ll still fall in the end… ARE YOU LISTENING!!?”

Putting the phone next to his ear, Kamijou was silently worried (maybe) that Komoe-sensei, who was clinging onto the magician, would be burnt to a crisp, but Stiyl unexpectedly didn’t seem to be using his powers. Seemed like if the other person was a small girl, he would let down his guard.

He couldn’t talk about the magic battle in front of Komoe-sensei.

Kamijou intended to say “Call you back later,” and end off the call, but—

“Call Tsuchimikado.”

In the midst of this ruckus, Stiyl said,

“He seemed to have gotten some clue. I’ll get over there as soon as I get rid of her.”

## Part 5

Tsuchimikado was at a certain corner of District 7.

It was where Kamijou and Fukiyose had first met Oriana.

It was an ordinary road. There were several large department stores around, as the gas cylinder-sized robotic guards passed by the wind-powered windmill generators, moving around on the road. The students wearing PE attire were passing through as usual, but the tourists, who were in plainclothes, would especially stop by to see these robots. It was a place that could be easily spotted, but at the same time, a place that one could easily get lost.

Tsuchimikado had already switched out of his damaged PE clothes for new ones, and it was almost impossible for one to see the bandages wrapped underneath from the outside. Even so, it was hard to conceal that pale face of his. There was no wind blowing, but his body continued to sway, and his breathing was abnormally light and rushed. The Level 0 ability, Auto-Rebirth could only repair broken blood vessels. Even so, without this ability, he might have fallen a long time ago, right?

Even in this condition, Tsuchimikado Motoharu continued to stand under a corner of the large sun.

The reason was simple: he had something to do.

(To practically use my own feet to confirm things…)

Tsuchimikado looked up at the flying ships and balloons in the blue sky.

(…I know about quite a few things. That Oriana took the risk to come out and walk about on the streets, so the reason is this?)

He was a skilled user of a major Eastern magic type—the Onmyoji Arts.

Though it was Onmyoji, he had to practice quite a lot of spells, like fengshui, divination, alchemy, mantra, prayer and clepsydra, etc, with all sorts of targets and directions, including the calculation of time and the survival of a country; managing all these was the real ability of Onmyoji.

Tsuchimikado’s specialty was in fengshui, but this was all that he had learned.

One could understand it by looking at the sky.

The sky was blocked by the dark green leaves of the trees, but this was unrelated.

By confirming today's date and coordinates, he could tell what kind of stars were arranged in the blue sky. Even if he didn't use a celestial globe or an astrology site, he could accurately assimilate all the knowledge of the constellations and their positions in his head.

(If it's of Index level, even if the person doesn't look up at the sky to confirm it, it's likely that the person could guess the answer by hearing this nya…)

Tsuchimikado bitterly thought.

It was already a problem to think of even using pure knowledge to go up against that girl.

No matter what, he still managed to come up with a conclusion.

(I see…nya. By using the constellations…such a view, this seems to be correct. This seems…to be based on an autumn's constellation nya…no matter from which point…seems like one can use the same magical meaning behind it, completely…analyzing this constellation…this should be what the enemy did… it hurts.)

Tsuchimikado scowled as he pressed on his flank, arranging his thoughts.

Following the path that Oriana had taken, he understood something.

No matter where he looked at the constellation, it was all the same.

At first glance, it was an obvious conclusion, but if mixed in with a magician meaning, the situation was different.

A so-called constellation was really something temporary seen from Earth. The stars looked like they were arranged, but that was just a misconception seen from both near and far-off distances. In radical terms, if one saw the constellations seen on Earth from the side, they would look completely different.

In even stricter terms, if one was to observe the constellation from a slightly different point, the constellation would be 'slightly' off shape. That was also something that could not be sensed by the human eye. Thus, several new magicians who interpreted it wrongly would lose control of their own spells. For Greek and Egyptian magicians who had wanted to use the power of the

constellation, the reason why they had wanted to build giant temples was to establish a more intricate and sophisticated observatory.

The starry sky itself wasn't strange, as it was a resource that anyone could use, but it took time to prepare a spell to accept the power of a constellation: this was the characteristic of a spell that required the use of a constellation. Though Tsuchimikado mentioned before that 'a constellation could be used on numerous types of spells,' there had to be different observatories set up for different types of spells. An example would be the multi-religions Greeks, who established their 'Ares Temple' and 'Helios Temple'.

Even so, Tsuchimikado had already passed through 3 to 4 observatories, and yet the displayed meanings were completely the same.

(This isn't a coincidence nya. In other words—I can confirm that Oriana and Lidvia are planning to use an autumn constellation to activate the Croce di Pietro…)

Tsuchimikado looked up at the wide sky.

He narrowed his eyes as he looked through the sunglasses.

(…If so, what's with this contradiction?)

## Part 6

"Ah, Fukiyose-chan? Are you feeling better now?"

Fukiyose Seiri made a call, and Tsukuyomi Komoe's voice could immediately be heard.

She was in the atrium of the hospital now. After resting on the hospital bed for a while and walking around after that, she had regained her strength, and her

mobility had drastically increased.

In this resting place that had a roof, there were wooden benches. Besides Fukiyose, there were 5 or 6 patients using their phones. There was a metal plate nailed onto the pillar, ‘Phone usage area, sophisticated medical devices are forbidden to be brought in here,’ like a sign indicating that it was a smoking area.

To people who liked to make a call whenever they were free, the hospital, a place that banned the use of cell phones everywhere, was a rather oppressive place to them. This place was one that allowed them to use their phones at will.

Fukiyose placed the phone near her ear.

“I’m alright here. Is there anything wrong with Daihaseisai? Like, did those fools disclose any funnels?”

“Ah! There is! There is! Himegami-chan was in critical danger!”

“…Don’t tell me that those idiots saw her changing!?”

“It’s not that! Himegami-chan was attacked and sent to the hospital! Luckily, Kamijou-chan and his friend were passing by. If it was just Komoe-sensei…if it was just me, it would have been a really serious situation…”

Komoe-sensei sounded depressed, but it didn’t feel like despair from deep inside her heart. Maybe she was relieved that they had avoided the worst case scenario.

But, Fukiyose was still mindful of some things.

(Attacked…?)

The first question that came to mind was, by who? And why?

The transfer student, Himegami Aisa, may have a few problems of her own. However, it was said every year that those people who hated Academy City wanted to make use of Daihaseisai to do something. If so—

(What are the Anti-Skill and Judgment members doing…?)

Not considering the Judgment members who had to take part in the matches,

Anti-Skill should be doubly prepared. The open feeling of Daihaseisai was just what it looked like on the surface.

Were they slacking around?

Or was it that someone with better abilities than them was running around on the streets?

And most importantly,

“What does ‘if not for Kamijou-chan and his friend’ mean?”

“It’s just like that. Himegami-chan was hurt badly, Sensei was unable to handle it by myself! But Kamijou-chan and his friend settled it flawlessly! Ah, who’s that priest that’s with Kamijou-chan? He ran away before I could thank him…ah! Can it be that guy who slipped past the corner!!”

On the other side of the phone, one could clearly hear the sound of footsteps ‘patapata’.

“…”

Wasn’t that the same feeling in the beginning?

That time, when she fell due to heatstroke, who was the one who had reacted first, and who took care of her?

That boy who specially snuck into other schools’ matches.

Calmly assessing the entire situation, it did seem strange.

Fukiyose thought.

(I got heatstroke, Himegami was attacked. Is there anything related between these two cases? However, if both cases are related to Kamijou Touma…)

What was going on? Fukiyose frowned.

(…What’s going on in this city?)

# Part 7

Kamijou heard about the information from Tsuchimikado, who had returned. Maybe his Auto-Rebirth was starting to gain effect, as his tone seemed to be more energetic. But, seeing his rather pale face covered with cold sweat, Kamijou felt that he should go to the hospital for a check-up.

Tsuchimikado told him two things.

Oriana and Lidvia intended to use one of Autumn's constellations to activate the Croce di Pietro. Every point 'observatory' was based on that constellation. However, Tsuchimikado was rather suspicious about his own results.

"The reason why Oriana is moving about is definitely related to the constellations, and may also be the crux to the activation of the Croce di Pietro —but this is really suspicious. Can this really activate the St. Peter's Cross? No matter what, in historical records, the times when the Croce di Pietro was activated were mainly during times with summer constellations. No matter how one thinks, at the end of September, it should be an autumn's constellation now. It's really hard to imagine it as a replacement…what other conditions, there should be something that we don't know about."

Tsuchimikado looked pale and his skin looked sweaty. The new set of PE clothes that he had changed into looked new, but there were blood stains on his fingerprints.

It looked painful, but he probably didn't want to be asked about it.

"But, right now, wouldn't Oriana not risk being found out by her pursuers when she starts to look for points that are related to that constellation, Tsuchimikado? Do you know of places that Oriana might not have gone to? And where?"

"Hm…but I'm rather mindful about that 'unexplained problem'. According to the results, besides the places that I found, there are also other places that can be used as an 'observatory' nya. To be honest, there's not enough time. If we suddenly decide to rush off to the 'observatory' that we predicted, and if Oriana

activates the spell somewhere else in the opposite direction, what next? We can't just pack up and close shop nya."

Tsuchimikado said, as he rubbed away the sweat that was flowing down.

Kamijou confirmed the time.

It was around 5 PM.

That was right, even if they used the tram or the bus, as of the time now, it was rather dangerous to get from one side of the street to another. Not knowing the actual time made it even harder for them. If they were not careful, everything might be over in an hour.

Kamijou looked at the clock function on his phone's display.

"Come to think about it, we don't even have time to even think! Just standing around, doing nothing, time will still go on! I don't want to snap back only to realize that we can't make it there in time."

"I know that…damn it, what's that Stiyl doing at this time?"

Tsuchimikado also knew that it was a critical situation for them, his voice sounding bitter.

Were they going to step in without any concrete information?

Or were they going to step in after having enough information?

No matter what they chose, they lacked the necessary condition required to push them into action. Their thoughts created silence, which created a huge pressure, and Kamijou felt that the air around them was getting heavier.

Suddenly, the phone rang.

It was not from Kamijou's phone.

Tsuchimikado looked surprised as he picked up the phone, and upon seeing the display on the screen, his expression changed drastically.

"Kami-yan, it's from the Anglican Church."

Come to think of it, Stiyl had mentioned that he requested information from the members of the English Library.

Maybe there was some new information.

Anyway, to Kamijou and Tsuchimikado, who wanted some new information, they didn't care what kind of content it was. Tsuchimikado, who was normally cool-headed, slightly panicked as he picked up the phone. The loudspeaker function was already activated, but Kamijou placed his face near Tsuchimikado's phone.

In the end, on the other side of the phone, the voice belonged to…

"Oh my, may I ask, are you Mr. Stiyl Magnus?"

"TO THINK THAT IT'S A WRONG NUMBER!!"

Both of them exclaimed at the same time. The woman on the phone sounded depressed, and said "I'm sorry"…it was alright, really, but since she wanted to talk to Stiyl, a foreigner, why was she speaking in Japanese? Kamijou wondered.

Tsuchimikado irritatedly sighed.

"Ah—ah—this is Tsuchimikado. I'm working with Stiyl right now, so I'll take the report nya…now, what do you have?"

"Just this. I've checked the records of the English Library, and found some new information regarding the Croce di Pietro, so I'm going to report it."

That casual voice could be heard.

On hearing that voice, Kamijou started to feel suspicious. Where had he heard this voice before?

"Ah, don't tell me…you're Orsola?"

"This voice…ara ara. So it's you. Thank you for what you've done during the past few days. Thanks to you, my body has now completely—"

"Nya, we're off topic. Can we continue?"

Tsuchimikado said in an anxious and tired voice,

“—I’m working very well with the Anglican Church. Two days ago, Miss Kanzaki even introduced me to this Japanese food store that sold wonderful food…ah, that’s right, I heard that they’re letting the Amakusa handle London’s own little Japan.”

“You’re ignoring Tsuchimikado’s words with a smile on your face!? Ah—hurry up and tell us what you know!!”

Kamijou started to shout, and Tsuchimikado shook his head about as if he was anemic. On the other side of the phone, Orsola at least gave an “Ara ara” as she got away from the topic.

“I see, then I better start talking about the information that I obtained from the English Library fast…Hohoho, this is good news, isn’t it?”

“…Even if you say it, please don’t tell us anything about places that sell good Japanese food.”

Kamijou said softly. In response, the other person said with a lively tone,

“I know that.”

And then,

“Actually, there’s a sushi shop five minutes from Waterloo station that sells really good sushi.”

“DIDN’T I TELL YOU NOT TO SAY THIS!? STOP CHANGING THE TOPIC!! HURRY UP AND TELL US ANYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CROCE DI PIETRO!!”

“What a pity…then, back on topic, please listen carefully.”

Orsola’s soft voice had a certain force in it.

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado looked very serious as they focused all their attention on the phone.

“From the scattered records of the English Library, what we got are the conditions required to use the Croce di Pietro.”

Kamijou’s shoulders shuddered slightly.

Right now, what they wanted to know the most was information on the conditions required to use the Croce di Pietro.

Orsola said to the two of them, now holding their breaths and waiting for further information.

“I heard that the Croce di Pietro is a large scale spiritual item that requires the power of a constellation. People place the Cross on the Earth to accurately collect astronomical information. This is a mechanism that aligns itself accurately, collects light in the sky, and helps a caster activate the magic’s effects.”

“Which is what I told Kami-yan. The Croce di Pietro is some sort of a parabolic antenna. But…”

“…About this. To be honest, it isn’t something new.”

Kamijou inadvertently sighed, and Tsuchimikado just let his shoulders drop.

“Oh my, why are you all so depressed?”

“We’re sorry, Orsola, we’re thankful that you work hard to find information for us. We’ve also found some things on this side, and right now, we don’t know how to take the next step.”

“I see—”

Orsola sounded depressed, but Kamijou was unable to care more about it.

Though Kamijou and Tsuchimikado didn’t know how much information Orsola had gotten from the English Library, it should be less than what they had. If they couldn’t get a better result now, it was like declaring that there was no suitable clue for them in this deadlock.

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado looked grim.

At this moment, Orsola Aquinas, who was on the other side of the phone, said,

“—Then, about the information that Sherry and I found regarding the suitable constellations for the Croce di Pietro to be used, you should know about it. The Croce di Pietro doesn’t use any summer or winter constellation, and can use 88 different types of constellations all over the world…”

“Ah?”

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado let out this sound at the same time.

“Wait a sec, Orsola. What did you just say? I know that the area for it to be used is limited, but this is the first time that I heard that all the summer and winter constellations can’t be used. Just now, Tsuchimikado was worrying about the current season, that it’s impossible to use the Croce di Pietro. If we can solve this, all our problems are gone. So I’ll be really grateful if you can explain this clearly.”

“…Ah, the situation has unexpectedly changed for the better. This is something to be happy about. However, I’m still a bit sad that not all the information can be used.”

“Stop despairing on your side. Hurry up and explain it, Miss Orsola. Also, is that Sherry you mentioned that Sherry!!?”

Kamijou called out two to three times, and at least Orsola finally got back on topic.

“That…St. Peterborough…called St. Peter in England, is still widely called St. Peterborough. He was martyred on the 29th of June. Of course, the Croce di Pietro that the Vatican used was something later.”

Christianity was recognized in the 4th century. In reality, the Holy See was marked as an independent ‘territory’ around the 8th century. However, the time when Croce di Pietro had been used, which was after Peter’s death, was around the 1st century. Tsuchimikado had already explained this.

Orsola again theorized that when Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity at the start of the 4th century, when Frankish King Papal invaded Italy and handed the land over to the pope—these events that were beneficial to the

Roman Catholic Church, all of them were due to the power of the Croce di Pietro.

“???...Excuse me, Orsola, but I’m completely clueless about history here.”

“In other words, you just need to remember that the time for the Cross to be used at the Vatican is normally during the end of June to the start of July.”

Orsola sounded relaxed. However, Tsuchimikado instinctively asked,

“…You say, at the Vatican?”

“Yes. In history, the Croce di Pietro was used once. Like what everyone here knows, that Cross can also be used anywhere outside the Vatican. Now the problem is—”

She paused for a while, before continuing,

“—The only time when the Cross can be used at the Vatican is on June 29th. If one is to use it somewhere else, it must have its own date. In other words…”

Orsola continued again,

“In order to use the Croce di Pietro, the caster has to know the details, features and characteristics of the area. Also, the caster has to choose the most effective constellations on the area out of the 88 for the activation to be complete. Lots of knowledge is required for these complicated characteristics of the area and constellation, though it’ll cause a constraint of using it only once a year. If they use this method, even if it’s the entire world, it may end up being taken over by the Roman Catholic Church.”

According to what Orsola said, in order to evangelize to the ‘sinners’, Lidvia Lorenzetti continued to move around the world. During this time, she might have looked for the conditions that were required to activate the Croce di Pietro, which were the constellations corresponding to the local region, and the location and duration for the ‘observatory’ to be used. While Orsola was still a Roman Catholic, she had seen Lidvia carrying an old set of binoculars as she headed off to the next area.

“In other words, Lidvia once entered Academy City to look for places to use the

Croce di Pietro?”

“This problem can be solved by using a test…for example, there’s no need for all the latitudes and longitudes, as one can mark it down using the North Star. By knowing the important stuff before calculating the rest on a table, it’s alright for them even if they don’t enter Academy City. ”

“I see.”

Kamijou slowly digested what Orsola had told him.

“Wait a sec, isn’t that a Cross that was made because of Peter’s death? If so, why can it be used in times other than the time when Peter died?”

“That’s what I was wondering…”

Orsola pondered for a while, and said,

“That spiritual item…seemed like it was prepared before Peter’s death…”

“…What’s going on?”

“Actually, Peter did think through it, where he would be killed. As you all know, where Peter is resting today is the center of the Vatican. He knew that the place where he was going to be killed would be closely linked to the history after that, so it ended up like that…thus, besides the Vatican…if there’s another place that’s suitable to the Roman Catholic Church, he could have chosen that place to increase the strength of the conditions required to use the Croce di Pietro.”

Hearing this, Kamijou swallowed his saliva.

Then,

“But, even if he can choose the place, he can’t change the date, right? Like say, not when he’s about to die, but to decide a date to use it…”

“That’s right. In fact, Peter was executed on the 29th of June. That is also the day that the Croce di Pietro can be used at the Vatican.”

“…If so, he intended to be killed that day, purposely letting himself get caught?”

“That isn’t…impossible nya.”

“Peter wasn’t on good terms with the Roman empire at that time, for he was enemies with the high magician of the empire, Simon Magus, and in the end, killed him. (Note: Legend had it that the magician Simon wanted to show that his power exceeds those of the Apostles, and thus let himself float in the air. As Simon was floating in the air, Peter kneeled down and asked God for a miracle. In the end, Simon immediately fell down and ended up dead). To do that sort of thing when Christianity was being persecuted, one can imagine what sort of end he would meet.”

“And there are many legends about Peter when he was executed. Besides the just stated one, there’s also the famous ‘Quo Vadis (Where are you going?)’ legend (Note: At first, Peter was convinced by his fellow believers to escape to the gates of Rome, and saw Jesus. He asked Jesus, 'Where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'I’m going back to Rome, to be nailed on the Cross again.' Thus, Peter understood what he meant, and went back to pay the price of his faith with his life). As Peter was being pursued by the Imperial soldiers, he was saved by his fellow believers, who begged him to run onto the streets. He already reached the gates, only to let himself get captured by the soldiers. Furthermore, he saw a vision of the Son of God at the exit, realizing that that is the time when he has to be the martyr.”

Orsola continued,

“On the day that Peter was executed on the Cross, he made this request, ‘I don’t dare to die the same way as my Lord, so please turn the Cross over.’ Of course, such a sentence came from a highly revered Christian, but maybe—”

“—Maybe, there’s some sort of significance in this act…”

Kamijou couldn’t help but mutter.

One of the Twelve Apostles, Peter must have known that no matter what action he took, he would be executed one day. So, he could have used his own death and tried to get the best out of it, even considering what might happen several hundred years later.

After that, it was the founding of the Holy See.

For this land, for the person he should be protecting silently.

This was different from an ordinary conviction. He actually considered the effects, results and outcome of where he was going to be killed, and at what time, before setting off for his road to death. This was the ultimate mix of coldness and mercy, a magic that could only be displayed by the ultimate performance. This was the Croce di Pietro spell that the Roman Catholic Church so rarely used.

“For historical Greats to do something on their own tombs isn’t uncommon. Even Prince Shotoku ‘completely destroyed’ the fengshui of his own tomb where he should be laid to rest forever, for he intended to cut ties with his descendants.”

Tsuchimikado’s face remained green as he said that, half impressed and half finding it unbearable.

After hearing this, Kamijou raised the most important question,

“Then, Orsola. Do you know…where the possible locations that the Croce di Pietro can be used on the 19th of September in Japan are?”

“That’s right.”

The other person replied without hesitation.

“Of course I do.”

## Part 8

Both mother and daughter, Misaka Misuzu and Mikoto were on the streets.

It was a corner on the second story of a large department that linked the subway

to the surface and to an overhead bridge with a complicated three part road. On the second level that both of them were on, there were many stores on both sides selling handicrafts.

There was still some time till the next match which involved Tokiwadai Middle School. Mikoto was accompanying Misuzu on a shopping trip, and the places that Misuzu wanted to go to were places that were set aside to allow people to shop.

“Wait a second, you don’t have to buy that vase cylinder that costs like 5 billion yen! You’ll get sick of it in 3 days! 3 days!”

“Oh Mikoto-chan. Speaking about Academy City, one has to buy this sort of thing that no one can figure out as a gift, you know!”

“What? If we’re using the latest and most advanced technology, we can’t allow you to bring it out anyway. Also, what’s with that multi-flowered vase? It says what ‘In theory, this can replicate the surface of the fifth dimension with light refraction technology,’ this is basically a lie! Can you really go to the fifth dimension to check it out!?”

“But it’s this sort of uncertainty that makes it so interesting.”

“A real gift should be about dwelling in wonderful memories!”

“Wa, to say something like dwelling in wonderful memories, Mikoto-chan’s really a girl—”

“Shut up, stupid mom.”

Mikoto tugged at her mother’s hand, pulling her away from the stall. She was trying to advise her mother to buy a souvenir that was more worth it. For a middle school student who was going through a rebellious stage, one could say that she had a rather good relationship with her family members.

The mother and daughter combo seemed to be attracting quite a lot of attention, but they didn’t seem to mind it.

“Ah, a souvenir, but I want to go to places that can only be seen in Academy City. Mikoto-chan, do you know of any good places? Okaa-san wants to see a

giant spaceship."

"…What are you treating Academy City as?"

"Then I'll compromise and have a pure and innocent girl that looks like a humanoid weapon."

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING!!"

Mikoto inadvertently shouted out. At this moment, she felt that someone was staring at her with a strong intensity from somewhere outside her field of vision. Compared to the crowd that was staring at her, it was of a totally different intensity.

"Kuro…Kuroko?"

Mikoto stuttered as she turned around. The twin-pigtailed girl sitting on the athletic upside-down V-shaped wheelchair was looking strange. Shirai Kuroko's eyes were glittering, radiating a shining light, and even the person pushing the wheelchair, a petite girl with a flowerbed on her head, couldn't help but flinch.

Shirai Kuroko swallowed her saliva as she said,

"This…is this onee-sama's…family member? This…is wonderful. So wonderful that words can't describe it! What's with this expansion of onee-sama's radiance? Damn…damn it. If so, I made up my mind! Kuroko won't care whether they're sisters or mother or daughter, I'll take them all! MWAHAHAHAHAHA!!"

Basking in the glow of the Misaka family, Shirai Kuroko's thought process was completely messed up.

Deep inside, Mikoto swore not to let this person know of the Sisters' existence.

"Ara ara, is Mikoto-chan's interest heading in that direction?"

"What direction are you talking about? I'm always straight!!"

"You're right. Mikoto-chan's rather infatuated with that boy, so she doesn't have enough time to look for other love interests."

“EH? JUST SHUT UP!!”

Misuzu agilely dodged past a diving Mikoto. At this moment, she saw a familiar person from the corner of her eye.

(Hm? That’s…hoho, speak of the devil.)

Right now, Mikoto and Misuzu were at the second level, located on a three part road that led both upstairs and downstairs. The familiar person was holding onto a handrail, facing the lower level. Maybe because of this, it seemed that he didn’t notice them.

It was a boy with spiky black hair. There was a blond teenager beside him, a head taller, wearing sunglasses. Both of them were in similar PE attire, so it seemed that they were classmates.

(Both of them look serious though.)

From here, she couldn’t hear what they were saying, but the expressions of these boys were such that it was rare to even see it in an important corporate dealing. It was the look of someone putting the fate of others on their shoulders. What was making these young boys look like this in Misuzu’s eyes? Misuzu couldn’t imagine.

“Hey, Mikoto-chan, isn’t your Prince Charming over there?”

“Who would fall for that— no, I don’t understand what you’re trying to say!!”

Now flushed red, Mikoto must have thought that her mother was teasing her, so she chose not to look in the direction that Misuzu was pointing. At this point, the boys disappeared as they moved into the crowd.

## Part 9

Tsuchimikado hung up the phone.

“Now it seems like the Croce di Pietro that Oriana and Lidvia have isn’t something that they can use whenever they want to.”

“Yup. They might have investigated the possible locations of the ‘observatories’. According to Orsola’s explanation, Lidvia might have looked for the locations and active durations of these observatories.”

According to the report that Orsola Aquinas provided, Lidvia was looking for any possible observatories. That was done by going to several areas to test, compile the results, and calculate the locations. In other words, she might not have been to the ‘observatory’ in Academy City.

“Which means right now, what Lidvia and Oriana are doing is going there themselves to calculate the marginal error in coordinates…or something like that.”

“Seems like it. Oriana was moving around this entire time because she couldn’t find a suitable place to use the magic, or maybe there are some other reasons. Anyway—it’s here.”

At the place that Orsola indicated, located inside Academy City, besides the places that Oriana Thomson had searched through, there was still one last place left.

“Though we took a long way to get here, it seems like the situation has changed for the better. It’ll be great if it’s really successful.”

Kamijou looked up at the sky. It was 5:20 PM, and the blue sky was gradually turning orange.

“A single location… How long has it been since when we last saw Oriana? Maybe she could have checked that place out already, and has moved on to other places?”

“Nope. I’ve already checked out the other places…from a constellation viewpoint, it doesn’t seem very suitable. Even if it’s outside, there are two areas blocked by towers, and another 3 are blocked by the leaves of trees. So, they

would use this extremely open area as their final destination nya.”

“An open area—hey! That’s where you marked out on the map!”

“That’s right. There’s no other place more open than this.”

Tsuchimikado said as he gave Kamijou the map that had marker markings on it. The extent of his injuries was grave; his fingers were trembling and the marked out areas weren’t very obvious.

District 23.

It was a unique school district that completely specialized in aeronautical and astronautical engineering. Besides the international airport that was used for foreign tourists to arrive and depart, all the other parts on the map were blank. This blank meant that it wasn’t a place recommended for touring. Besides civilian aircraft, this place was where fighter jets, protectors of Academy City’s airspace, and unmanned helicopters were developed. The security during Daihaseisai should be at its best. The place that Tsuchimikado had marked out with a marker on the map was right in the middle of the blank area. Looking at this, one couldn’t really tell what was so different here as compared to other streets.

Seeing Kamijou’s puzzled look, Tsuchimikado chuckled.

“It’s the ‘Ironhide Institute of Aviation Technology’, a subsidiary body of the airport…it specializes in the development of a short runway in Academy City nya. For me, who knows what’s going on inside, it’s a different thing altogether, but for Oriana, who’s here for the first time, it should be hard for her to take down this place nya.”

“…However, Oriana is a magician, right? She won’t even care about the defenses that Academy City set up. I don’t think she’s the type of person who’ll care about being caught on camera.”

“However, all the observatories that Oriana has been through are places where the security is rather lax. You’ll understand it once you go there that she’s moving from the least secured area to the most secured one. Oriana and Lidvia seem to be more cautious about Academy City than we expected…if Oriana didn’t care about the security at all, she wouldn’t have snuck among the crowd.

Kami-yan, think about the past battles against those magicians. Do you think that Sherry Cromwell actually cared about Anti-Skill's movements?"

Now that he mentioned it, these magicians…seemed like they'd break through from the front if they could do so.

Oriana and Lidvia intended to make use of the intricate balance between the science power and the magic power during Daihaseisai. They didn't want to use their power to radically change the current situation.

Outside Academy City, there were many different magicians waiting for the chance. It was impossible for them to take on the magicians and the defenses of Academy City.

"Anyway, we can only hope that the security will somehow be able to trip Oriana up, and that we can hurry up and launch our counterattack. Basically, they're heading to the last 'observatory'. Everything will be over once we catch them there."

"What? Though it sounds easy when you say that, if we rendezvous with Oriana there, we would be wasting the same amount of time!"

Just as Kamijou was speaking, he caught sight of a red-haired priest who was rather obvious looking.

Just as he was turning around with a surprised look on his face, Stiyl Magnus was running over.

"What were you doing all this while nya. Don't tell me you ran into Oriana and Lidvia…"

"No…"

Stiyl seemed to have difficulty saying it, so Kamijou answered for him.

"Oh yeah, this guy was thanked and lot by Komoe-sensei for saving someone, being hassled by sensei, and being bothered by it. That must be what happened."

"Eh!? You…you silly amateur! I got away from that woman once I finished that call just now. Even if I use the Opila runes, once I get away from the spell

boundary, I'll be caught again. I spent quite a while before I got away."

Stiyl unhappily spit out the shortened cigarette and extinguished it by stepping on it. Tsuchimikado's expression remained cold as he observed Stiyl.

"…Nya, that should be the Kami-yan disease. In this serious situation, while this Tsuchimikado-san is drenched in blood as he uses the 'All-Around Reality Circle', you're stuck in this sort of love comedy situation nya…and to think that the target isn't Index, but Komoe-sensei. You two are so weird, always so half-hearted. If you're a man, you should just focus on one and go all the way!"

"Stop talking about that Kami-yan disease. For you to say this when you're infatuated with your own stepsister, it doesn't seem real to me."

"No way! Who'd feel affectionate for his own stepsister!? I, TSUCHIMIKADO, WOULD NEVER…IT HURTS!! …My wounds will hurt once I sho…shout…"

Tsuchimikado pressed against his waist as he continued to tremble.

Kamijou tiredly shook his head.

"Let's not talk about Maika, right now, we have to focus on what to do next. The security around District 23 is really high. We don't even know how to get in."

"…Wait…wait a second, Kami-yan. Let the elite Onmyoji specialist Tsuchimikado Motoharu handle this situation…we just need to use that, that special privilege that Oriana doesn't have, but we do."

"Ah? What privilege?"

Kamijou let out a surprised sound. Tsuchimikado chuckled as he operated his phone.

"Mn. Do you know about the board chairman of Academy City nya?"

## Part 10

Oriana Thomson was at the last stop of District 23.

District 23 was different from the other districts, in that there was only one station. The train station, which connected to all the roads in this district, was enormous, the width and complexity comparable to that of an international airport.

There were 8 ordinary train lanes, 5 subway lines, 2 high speed monorail lines, and another 4 bus lanes at the bus terminal that was just outside the main entrance. Besides that, there were also a special delivery lane and a VIP-use lane that were not opened to ordinary people.

(...That's strange.)

Standing among them, Oriana nonchalantly looked around and muttered in her own heart.

The security system had changed.

There were many Anti-Skill members at the terminal, hidden among the crowd full of people that were carrying large-sized baggage trolleys with one hand. However, their positioning had changed. More accurately, it felt like they were letting down their guard. Though they weren’t suddenly leaving the station, they were moving to places without any significance. If so, the number of blind corners would increase for them.

Standing in this white-based station, with the walls and ceiling full of windows to absorb as much sunlight as possible, Oriana continued to ponder.

District 23 was a special area in Academy City. Besides the path that was connected to the international airport, everything else was inaccessible. In reality, it was easy to get all the way to the terminal, but difficult to take the next step forward. Thus, she had been waiting on the path that linked the terminal with the international airport, continuously looking for a chance…

(The chance is definitely here, but this is a little too weird.)

She wanted to contact Lidvia, but to use the communicating spell in this situation, would she be discovered by the magician scouts? Oriana pondered

before placing the flashcard near her mouth. She theorized that the enemy's investigating ability shouldn't be that strong.

"Lidvia."

She tore a flashcard and muttered.

"You should be mentally prepared to start the final preparations now."

The reply came in the form of words on the surface of her retina, scrolling down like words moving down a screen.

"…Isn't it still not time yet?"

"This nee-chan wants to take it easy, but it seems like those boys have made their move. To be slow by a beat in this intense moment, it may be a bit too ugly."

From the corner of her eye, Oriana caught sight of the Anti-Skill members who were changing their positions.

"The security has changed unnaturally. Maybe they found out that we are here. There's no people clearing field or any spell that manipulates senses. This has to be orders from Academy City itself."

"You mean that Academy City broke its own balance, and plan to take us down in one swoop?"

"On the contrary, it feels like they're deliberately retreating, creating a competitive atmosphere. Anti-Skill seems lost. Maybe they don't know why they have to change their set-up."

"If it's an invitation from the enemy, there's no need to reply, right? Anyway, get away from the station first, and to another district."

"No…"

Oriana looked up at the giant clock above the platform.

"I've looked around, and the most suitable place to use it is still here. If so, I'll

be waiting here…probably won't involve any ordinary people here."

"Is there any way to gain time by checking through it?"

"This problem will differ based on the number of enemies. But this nee-chan will work hard even if there are many of them."

Oriana's eyes left the electronic bulletin as she headed towards the stairs at the platform leading up.

Her strides were large and fast.

"Then so be it."

"Mn. Then I'll get prepared, Lidvia. We have to take down Academy City this time. As if we're shovelling in an innocent girl who is unaware of things into the ground."

## Part 11

With a rumbling sound, the train slid into the subway platform.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu didn't even look at the lump of metal that was slowing down.

His eyes were on his companions, Kamijou and Stiyl.

"I told the big guy up there to slightly change the security status of District 23. Even so, it's too unreasonable to 'remove all security of District 23', and most likely won't be allowed. We can only move in through the 'gap' formed when they move from position A to B…"

According to Tsuchimikado, the higher ups seemed to have ordered the changes to the positioning of the satellites and the image processing. Right now, they

were switching it around, so aerial monitoring would be much more lax.

Kamijou remembered the other person that Tsuchimikado had been talking to.

The board chairman of Academy City.

(…Aleister?)

As it was a phone call, Kamijou couldn't hear the other person's voice. But to be of a higher footing than Tsuchimikado, who was well-versed in science and magic, one could imagine that this man was somewhere even more far-reaching. This was something that the ordinary high school student, Kamijou Touma, was unable to see or reach.

"If we use the surface appearance of the constellation in the night sky, the Croce di Pietro probably won't be activated immediately after sunset. Right now, it's 5:25 PM, and it takes only 10 minutes to District 23's terminal station nya. The result is that we still don't know the time limit, though it's likely to be between 6 to 7…there's approximately 25 minutes left once we reached the station."

"Tsuchimikado. You just said that we're going to sneak in through the lapses in security when the guards are shifting around. There's a 10 minute time lag. Do you think that this position change will remain as it is?"

"Kami-yan. The security changes don't just involve one building. It's impossible to finish switching the guards around in 10 minutes. This is like a school's evacuation drill, the more people there are, the slower the movements— this is basic logic nya. At least when we sneak into District 23 at 5:35 PM, we can still pounce on the lapses in security."

Hearing this, Stiyl tossed the cigarette into the ashtray that was in the smoking area.

"Let me confirm this, you're going to appear before Oriana like that?"

"Eh? I do want to rest for a while nya, but even if security is lax, there can't possibly be none at all. District 23 isn't so simple that you two can break through like that."

"I see."

Stiyl casually replied.

This wasn’t to ask for any reason, but to check the other person’s intent.

“From 6 to 7, this is our limit, and at the same time, Oriana and Lidvia’s sickle. Even if they want to head off to other areas, the time would be up once they reach the other place. To them, wouldn’t they have to use the Croce di Pietro in District 23?”

Kamijou listened to what they said.

After that, the boy said,

“Whether it’s chasing after others or being chased, we’ll put an end to it now.”

“Oriana and Lidvia should be thinking about the same thing. And we have no disagreements—”

After that, the gradually decelerating train that was running with all its might finally stopped.

As the train arrived, the metal doors slid apart, releasing the people in the train onto the platform, but Kamijou and company didn’t mind the crowd. The crowd seemed to be avoiding the trio as they moved out in a human wave.

“—Once we step onto this train, there’s no way back. Right now, there’s only an all-out bloody battle with Oriana and Lidvia. Are you ready, Kamijou Touma?”

Hearing Stiyl’s voice, Kamijou remained silent.

A lot of things had happened today. He had smelled and tasted blood, tasted sand, fought with a magician that was walking on the street, fell into the enemy’s trap, saw someone fall in front of himself personally, realized that he was helpless in front of these injured people; grinding his teeth as he pulled through, he came all the way here.

“…Mm.”

Swallowing all these, Kamijou nodded his head.

“Remember, I don’t want to settle this by killing others.”

After that, Tsuchimikado chuckled like a child, while Stiyl lifted his lips slightly. They were expressing their feelings by smiling.

The three of them moved into the train.

The auto-doors closed. The train accelerated slowly as it headed into the subway…

Heading towards the war that was waiting for them.

## Between the lines 6

Oriana Thomson’s family members were all Christians.

Every Sunday, when they head out to Church, the elderly and kind priest would look at this young girl, and in a simple manner, repeat the same words over and over again.

He said that she must be a useful person.

She was always wondering: what is a useful person?

Of course, Oriana was normally a very kind person. For example, she would pick up an empty can on the ground, guide lost people who were standing in front of a subway map, work hard to deliver things that people really wanted to deliver to the destination.

But—

Such kind actions might not be ‘helpful to people’.

What if Oriana picked up an empty can that was on the road, and someone who

wanted to get some money and a home by cleaning the area would be troubled because there was nothing for him to do?

What if Oriana helped that someone go back home safely and that person might end up killing his own family?

What if the thing that the person wanted Oriana to deliver was a cursed item?

Even if she didn’t want to do this, even if she really wanted to be helpful to others, it would still cause a tragedy. This world was filled with many people with many different thoughts. Like the time when Oriana helped someone with corrupted values, each action she did to help someone may end up hurting someone else. It might end up pushing the poor, helpless, defenseless soul that Oriana wanted to protect into the depths of hell.

The difficult thing was that she couldn’t predict whether her acts would betray her own good intentions. If she had only known that such actions would betray her good intentions, she just didn’t need to do it. On the contrary, once she knew that this action would lead to success, she would choose to take this action without hesitation.

Of course,

Oriana knew that it was just plain stubbornness. This logic was like gambling: even if Oriana chose red a hundred times, and even when it was unrelated to Oriana’s own thoughts and words, the ball would always end up in different positions, and with differing luck and conditions, decide her victory or loss. Whether it was a guaranteed win when she chose red, or whether she would get the same number after a hundred times, there was no simple way to win. This was reality.

But—

What if this game involved human lives?

Even if she had to win this,

Which side should she bet on?

Was there anyone who could simply decide the outcome?

Just as she was being asked to help,

Her wounded heart was too afraid to extend out her hand. In the end, when she was unable to help, the person who requested help really got hurt in the end.

Because of this, she wanted a benchmark.

She wanted to use a benchmark for her to not suspect anyone.

The sure-win method of roulette—it'd be great if there was a benchmark. Because everyone's stand was different, the bickering would lead to tragedy. Like scooping up water with both hands, no matter how hard she tried, the water would flow out from the gaps between her intertwined fingers.

(It doesn't matter, even if it's the Emperor.)

Oriana Thomson hoped.

(It doesn't matter whether it's the king, pope, president, ministers, no matter the title, no matter who's on the throne, I'll fight for others. Whether it's science or magic, these things don't matter—)

She gritted her teeth as she thought,

(—I beg you, decide on a rule. Please grant my wish, allow me to have a clear benchmark and make everyone happy. A world that runs on this best rule that won't let anyone get involved in any discord, that may lead to tragedy.)

She thought about this, but she was unable to say it.

The reason was simple.

Though she said that she wanted to help others…

She had ended up harming others this time.

# Chapter 8: The Reason for the Clenched Right Fist.
## *Light_of_a_Night_Sky.*

### Part 1

“Touma isn’t around, huh?”

At the arena, Kamijou Touya gave a suspicious remark under the dusk-lit sky.

The matches were over, and the students were heading back. The spectators were heading out of the stands, and the area was surrounded by noisy chaos. Several Anti-Skill members were frantically leading the crowd, as Touya and his wife, Shiina, were the only ones standing at their original position, like they were a twig in the midst of a river called the ‘human wave’.

There was an Academy City teacher in front of them.

The unbelievable thing about this 135cm tall petite lady was that she was Kamijou Touma’s homeroom teacher. As they had met in an interview during the first semester, the two guardians weren’t too surprised. This teacher seemed to have changed her clothes, as her cheerleader clothes had an aroma of insect repellent.

But more importantly,

“Ara ara, why wasn’t my son participating in the matches? Was he unable to participate due to some injury or serious illness?”

Shiina said in a rather uncomfortable manner.

The one who had first suspected that something was amiss was her. She mentioned that she did not see her son during the team matches, but both of them

always felt that it was their fault that they could not spot their son. In the end, both of them were very depressed for being such irresponsible parents.

But both parents had only just confirmed that during the ‘ladle match’, a relaxed match that involved balancing a cooking ladle on a ball with a 2cm diameter and running 100m with it. In this match that required telekinesis to balance the plastic ball, or any fire ignition or wind to blow the ball away—there was still no sign of Kamijou Touma.

Clad in cheerleading attire, Tsukuyomi Komoe’s face went green.

She frantically swung her hands that were holding pompons.

“This…er…is that…we have already requested for help from Anti-Skill as well…”

Hearing the teacher’s words, Shiina frowned.

“Anti-Skill? Like…the police in this city. Maybe my son got involved in something that prevents him from participating in the matches?”

“No…it’s not like this. Your son was running around quite energetically with a priest, so I guess that he’s not in any dangerous situation…”

“??? In other words, you saw my son roaming around the city?”

Shiina, who was still wondering what was going on, tilted her head slightly. Though it was an unconscious movement, Komoe-sensei dejectedly dropped her shoulders when she saw that.

“…I’m really sorry. I’m the one who’s looking after your son, yet I couldn’t grasp his whereabouts.”

“Please don’t…”

Seeing Komoe-sensei lower her head like this, not moving at all, Touya and Shiina looked at each other, not knowing what to do. To this couple, as they understood their son’s character and ability (though they still hadn’t recognized it), they didn’t blame the teacher, instead hoping that the other person would clearly explain this.

“…(Though he isn’t here, he might be making trouble for some other girl. Hm, you’re really good at this.)”

“Ara ara. Touya-san, what did you just say?”

“Nothing.”

“However, I do feel that this aspect of Touma is genetically derived from you.”

“If you’re going to say that, why are you still making such a scary face, okaa-san!?”

Seeing the tip of the spear being pointed at him, Touya frantically backed away from Shiina. He then turned to Komoe-sensei, whose head was still down and was looking like she was going to cry any moment.

“Then…let me ask something. Ah, sensei, please look up.”

“Eh…ah, okay. What’s the problem?”

“Did Touma do this on his own? He wasn’t forced to run around, right?”

“Hm, yeah. That’s right.”

Her reply was somewhat hesitant.

Sensei said that when she met the son, it seemed like he knew something. The reason why her reply was hesitant was likely because this could heavily involve the son and other students, so she couldn’t tell Touya this.

Such a kind and gentle teacher, Touya thought as he nodded his head.

Thus, he decided not to pursue the matter further.

“If so,”

Kamijou Touya looked up at the sky.

Looking up at the dusk-lit sky with the first star beginning to shine, he said,

“That means, to Touma, it’s something much more important than the matches.”

It was a voice of someone recollecting some painful memories.

“If so, there’s no reason for me to stop him, is there?”

## Part 2

The colors of dusk appeared in the sky.

The asphalt ground looked like it was natural, like it had already been down there right from the start, like it was erased completely with an eraser. The plants didn’t grow here, there was nothing that could block the wind, as the slight breeze brushes her face. The smell of engine oil permeated the air, it was the atmosphere of this country’s urban terrain.

A sonic boom could be heard from above.

Looking up, the gigantic body of a plane flew through the sky at a low altitude. Maybe it was because it was Daihaseisai, there were a lot of planes flying around.

There was no one around.

The first reason was that this wasn’t some area that was meant to attract others. The second reason was that currently, the global scale sporting event Daihaseisai was underway. Compared to coming to this sort of place, it was much more meaningful to head to the arenas.

Thus, she was the only one on this asphalt road.

Because of the lengthened shadow cast by the setting sun, the shadow was of a woman holding a large Cross. The owner of this shadow slowly pulled away the Cross from her shoulder, and placed her hand on the white cloth wrapped around the Cross.

The cloth unraveled in a ‘walam’ sound.

This 150cm long, 70cm wide, 10cm thick pure white marble cloth appeared, with only the bottom of the Cross as thick and sharp as a sharpened pencil.

The Croce di Pietro.

On first glance, one could feel the weight of this thick stone item. Even after more than 1,800 years, this antique still looked as good as new, as if it had been shaped inside a plastic mold. Though it was a large stone item, being passed down from person to person over such a long time, the interior had not deteriorated the slightest bit.

Such perfect preservation was not due to the tool’s own defensive effect, but rather that it wasn’t revealed in history at all.

She used two hands to grab the white Cross that was as smooth as the skin of some rich Missy, and slowly lifted this Cross that had nothing on it. The weight of the Cross transferred from her arms to her back, waist and legs.

Without hesitation, she swung the Cross onto the ground.

With the increase in speed due to the enormous weight, and the sharp tip at the bottom,

The Croce di Pietro, with all the conditions met, pierced through the asphalt ground without any resistance, deeply into the ground of the capital of Japan.

“Let the sky be the ceiling, and let this place be a safe haven for the living. Please grant me protection, O Twelve Apostles.”

The line that stabilized the Croce di Pietro was different from how she would normally say this.

The Cross that was erected on the asphalt ground activated by itself, as it moved by itself adjusting the angle as if the ground was mud.

She looked up at the sky.

Though it was not completely night yet, the first star was starting to twinkle.

“Then…”

A magician was standing on the large experimental runway.

On this ground that no ordinary person could enter, the place looked like a grassland held by tar. The even asphalt ground continued on until the end of the horizon.

“I’m all done here. In a few minutes, the world will change.”

## Part 3

To the citizens of Academy City, District 23 was a foreign place.

(So wide…)

Walking out with Stiyl and Tsuchimikado, Kamijou couldn’t help but think this.

One could see a slightly circular horizon that was like foreign pastures. However, this horizon wasn’t of the green of grass, but the black and gray of asphalt and concrete. Half of this large area was runways and satellite launch areas, with the high fences surrounding this limitless space.

The buildings, which included the control tower and the experimental areas, were rather large, several times the size of the school. However, the surrounding lane was so thin in comparison, that it was like it had been placed there suddenly. The basic scale was just too unfamiliar.

Tsuchimikado looked at the bus stop in front of the terminal.

“…Though this is a top secret area, there are still buses that lead to the ordinary airport. The buses are driven by drivers nya, so this is probably to prevent any corporate spies from getting off the bus midway through.”

The sonic boom of the plane cut through Tsuchimikado’s words.

Kamijou inadvertently looked up at the sky. Mini-Cessna planes were flying over in threes, slowly ascending into the sky.

“The basis of security here is the ‘sky’. This is just a deceptive show of strength, since the area they have to guard is too big.”

That was true. In fact, till the end of the horizon, it would be difficult for them to completely patrol this area by human means. Also, the place was full of runways, there was no shade to hide in, and there was no way to hide from the satellites.

“But, isn’t it a little too hard to get to that Ironhide whatever Airport?”

“Well, Oriana still has a way.”

Stiyl echoed Kamijou’s words.

“Tsuchimikado, if there is a way, then hurry up and say it, we don’t have much time.”

“Nya, it’s that.”

Tsuchimikado said as he pointed to the sky above.

From above, there was the sound of air colliding.

This time, it was not the Cessna planes, but giant passenger jets with four engines each. The machines releasing this sonic boom slowly descended on a runway of the ordinary International Airport.

“To prevent colliding into each other, when other planes are flying in, they’ll change the patrolling routes that they would monitor, then—”

Tsuchimikado’s words were interrupted.

Wave after wave of passenger jets and mini-planes crossed the sky.

“—the sky here is unexpectedly crowded. If we can use the passenger jets to our advantage, we can use the blind spots left by the satellites and proceed on. The

problematic ‘Ironhide Institute of Aviation Technology’ is rather close to this place, so it should be possible for us to get there by just walking nya.”

For various reasons, Kamijou and company were running on the gray ground.

Tsuchimikado, who was running in front, would sometimes trip up due to the change in center of gravity. It was like someone sleeping in a lesson. However, even in this situation, Kamijou would be overtaken in a race by him if he was not careful. Such evidence showed how athletic Tsuchimikado was.

He followed Tsuchimikado’s lead, passing below several planes that were passing through. They could avoid the surveillance, but to run across this place, where there was no cover, it was rather thrilling on certain levels of significance.

In this place where there was nowhere to hide, there was still no sign of Oriana.

She must have reached the destination.

Kamijou continued to run as he pulled out his phone. The time on the display was 5:40 PM.

(There’s still…20 to 80 minutes left.)

This was the time left before the Croce di Pietro was activated.

Once the spiritual item was activated, Academy City would be taken over without any warning, even psychologically, no matter how unreasonably suppressed they were, nobody would feel that it was strange.

Though the situation was critical, Kamijou knew that no matter how anxious he was, he couldn’t stop the procession of time. As he continued to run, he could see the gray walled segment ahead. On the other side of the wall, it should be the ‘Ironhide Institute of Aviation Technology’ where Oriana was waiting.

They immediately got to the edge of the perimeter.

The metal mesh fence was about 2 meters tall. Tsuchimikado grabbed onto the fence with his hands and feet, and just as he was about to get over it—

From the corner of his eye, Kamijou noticed that something was shining.

It was stuck between the metal wires—a flashcard that was slightly drenched in saliva.

Normally cautious, Tsuchimikado wouldn't possibly overlook this. However, his consciousness may have been blurry due to the pain of the wounds.

"Eh?"

"TSUCHIMIKADO!!"

Just as Kamijou shouted,

BOOM!!

The entire row of wire fence became orange due to the intense heat.

Tsuchimikado, who was grabbing onto the fence with his hands and feet, jumped away as if he was electrocuted. He frantically left the metal fence, rolling on the ground, maintaining his distance. The Daihaseisai tour guidebook in his hand was released due to the impact, emitting black smoke before being swallowed by flames.

"GYAAAHHH!!"

A sizzling sound could be heard from Tsuchimikado's hands and feet, and they began to emit smoke like incense. The eyes underneath those shades were tightly shut, as he painfully gritted his teeth.

The things that were torturing his hands and feet were burns.

To Tsuchimikado, who preferred to engage in close range combat, it was like his weapon was destroyed by the enemy.

Tsuchimikado continued to struggle as he tried to stand up, but his wrists and ankles seemed stiff. It was like he was struggling in the mud. He couldn't stand up like he wanted to.

"Hurry up and go, Kami-yan…"

Tsuchimikado pressed onto a hand with his other injured hand.

“…We’re not going to get anything done by standing around here, hurry up and destroy that flashcard. You two, hurry up and go!!”

“But what are you going to do? Oh yeah, Stiyl, can you use your magic to heal him?”

“If they’re burns, it is possible—”

Stiyl and Kamijou turned their eyes from Tsuchimikado, who was on the ground, to the metal fence.

“—She’s waiting for us! Prepare your right hand, Kamijou Touma!!”

“!?”

Kamijou jumped back in shock and turned his head around.

About 500 meters away from the wire fence, the blond lady was reclining on the wall of a small building that has a mini runway inside.

Oriana Thomson.

She was holding flashcards that were held by the metal ring.

Oriana silently placed the card next to her mouth. At the same time, Stiyl shouted out,

“KAMIJOU TOUMA!!”

“I GOT IT!!”

Kamijou tried his best to get to the flashcard stuck on the metal fence. The wire fence was turning red as it overheated, but immediately reverted back to its original color and temperature the moment he touched it. Without confirming it, both of them climbed up the fence.

(If Oriana takes the preemptive strike now, Tsuchimikado won’t be able to get away now with his hands and feet injured…!)

He climbed up the fence.

(That means that we have to attack first! We can’t make any more sacrifices, not like Fukiyose-san or Himegami!!)

And leaped over.

At the same time, Oriana, who was far away, tore the flashcard.

The spell activated, and a blue and white light surrounded Oriana. She opened her arms wide, floating into the air, as if she was showing off some new clothes that she had just bought.

After that,

500 meters away, where Oriana was, an explosion could be heard. With her as the center, the surrounding air started to stir around as if a circle was being drawn. An invisible hammer started to attack, ignoring the distance. This clockwise winding pressure hammer cut down every single construct surrounding her, whipping up the asphalt and moving towards Kamijou.

“!!”

Kamijou immediately readied his right hand.

With a ‘pacha’ sound, the high-pressure wall was gone. Oriana, who was 500 meters away and looked like a small dot, hastily prepared another flashcard. Even so, it was still unable to prevent the asphalt ground from flipping up. Just as the stone tsunami was looming over,

“GASTTH (My hand brings fire), TFIAS (shape into a blade), TRIC (and bring forth thy judgment!)”

The card with runes on it fluttered in the air.

At the same time, a red flame sword appeared in Stiyl’s right hand. He swung the sword at the tsunami of stone, completely ignoring the fact that Kamijou was right beside him.

“EH!?”

As Kamijou frantically got down, the flame sword collided with the rock

fragments. After that, the flame sword lost its shape and exploded. The directional flames avoided Kamijou, who was below, and hacked horizontally at the asphalt wall, which exploded all over.

Kamijou, who lost his balance, got up and ran without tumbling.

Stiyl began to chant a new spell, creating a new flame sword.

Oriana started to play around with the flashcard in her hand.

The battle between the trio was about to begin.

The time was 5:50 PM. there were still 10 to 70 minutes before time was up.

## Part 4

The place where Kamijou and Oriana were was near an experimental area. During Daihaseisai, ad hoc studies should probably be suspended. There were no workers on the runway, and no lights inside the building.

This wasn’t as huge as an international, instead feeling like a mini-runway for home-made planes like Cessna planes. The three parallel runways were 30 meters wide and 700 meters long.

The buildings themselves were the control towers on both sides of the runway: a fish-slice shaped board that was mechanically supported. Instead of saying that it was research on planes, this place seemed to be focused on runway research. Each of the three runways had a giant fan, jet propeller, and other additional facilities.

But, because of the attack that Oriana let loose, the control tower machinery was destroyed, the experimental bodies that collected the data were blown apart, the asphalt ground was destroyed, as if someone was farming on it.

Both sides were running on this destroyed rubble.

The distance between both sides was about 300 meters.

“Ho.”

In this situation, Oriana Thomson smiled.

There were 250 meters left.

“I do feel that a battle between ladies is more interesting. As expected, that Saint didn’t come in the end.”

She put a flashcard next to her mouth.

200 meters left.

“There’s no additional Anti-Skill or magicians coming, huh? Hoho, it’s more interesting to have more people.”

A smile crept onto her face.

150 meters left.

“Ah ha! Seems like there’s only three of you left, huh? Oh my, oh my, nee-chan was really tricked!!”

Oriana delightedly exclaimed and she tore another flashcard in half.

“And one of you is definitely out of this match! I always thought that his mind was the clearest…or is it because of that? To stand at the most dangerous position so as to let his comrades avoid the trap? WAHAHAA!!”

With Oriana at the center, the sound of glass breaking spread all around. After a second, the sound bounced back like an echo. At that moment,

All the sounds vanished.

There were definitely planes flying around all over the place, but the sounds seemed like they had been blocked out. It was like the volume of a television set being cut off.

Stiyl, who was running alongside Kamijou, pulled out another rune card.

“Is it a boundary? This cuts off all forms of communication, no matter physical or magical!”

“!?”

Kamijou wanted to look around, but the enemy was right in front of him.

Stiyl, who was beside him, couldn’t confirm it either. The duo were running side by side, closing in on Oriana. She continued to maintain that smiling face, responding quickly with that flashcard of hers still in her hand.

The 100 meters was closed up.

Kamijou and Stiyl were thinking separately about attacking Oriana from both flanks. As the range of the flame sword was longer, and Stiyl, who was aiming, was much quicker.

“Hah!!”

Breathing in and making a sharp sound, the flame sword swung downwards.

With a “Humph”, Oriana tore another flashcard.

A water ball the size of a basketball appeared on her right hand. Oriana then proceeded to catch the flame sword with the water ball.

There was no explosion.

Before that, the water ball on Oriana’s hand changed shape, wrapping around Stiyl’s flame sword.

“!!”

Just before Stiyl was feeling surprised, the vine made by the water ball wrapped around his wrist, and extended onto his arm, before wrapping around his entire body, from the head to the feet. Stiyl, who was wrapped in a 3cm thick water body, lost his footing and collapsed onto the ground. He used his other hand, which was empty-handed, and pressed his throat.

(If this keeps up, my breathing…)

“Stiyl!!”

Kamijou changed direction, instead of running at Oriana, he was now running at Stiyl, who was on the ground.

“Oh my, this nee-chan isn’t so simple to let this happen, huh?”

She turned her body around, using her left leg to kick at Kamijou’s waist. His body suddenly froze.

“UGH!!”

Just as he was about to regain his posture, Oriana gathered her entire weight on her shoulder, ramming it towards Kamijou. Kamijou frantically used his hands to block, but the impact came from below. On being hit by an impact that could break even a door, Kamijou’s body flew backwards. His body struck the sharp and uneven surface of the asphalt ground, and a sharp pain could be felt.

Facing Kamijou, who was lying on the ground, Oriana pulled another flashcard to her mouth.

Just as she was about to bite and tear the flashcard,

“IAB (Destroy)!!”

With this sound, Stiyl, who was lying beside Oriana, let the flame sword explode. The water surrounding him scattered in all directions.

A new flame sword appeared in Stiyl’s right hand, and maintaining a low posture, he swung at Oriana from below. Facing the sharp tip of the sword that was aimed at her chest, Oriana moved her left foot backwards, as if she was letting someone else by on a narrow road.

Just this alone wasn’t going to avoid Stiyl’s attack.

Corresponding, Oriana used the hand with the flashcard to slam it into Stiyl’s chin. It felt like a lightly clenched fist, like she was begging. Stiyl, who was trying to counterattack, struck towards the fist with his entire weight.

BOOM!! An explosion could be heard.

Stiyl's upper body leaned back, as he landed on the ground without any resistance; the flame sword in his hand vanished. Oriana looked away from Stiyl, who was on the ground, as she slowly revealed a smile and looked at Kamijou. Even if he was outside the enemy's noticeable range, Stiyl didn't seem capable of launching a surprise attack. His black coat and red hair were fluttering around, as if it was being blown by a breeze.

"Cheh!!"

Kamijou frantically tried to stand up, but his body started to tremble.

Seeing Kamijou like this, Oriana gently smiled.

"Your waist is as weak as usual. To fight with nee-chan like this, even a child can grow up much more easily."

"You're too noisy…"

Kamijou re-clenched his fists.

"I'll stop you here; I won't let you activate the Croce di Pietro. If you're going to cause chaos in Academy City and destroy Daihaseisai, I'll definitely stop you."

"Isn't it too scathing to say that? This should be nee-chan's best performance. I don't know what the Anglicans told you, but the Croce di Pietro isn't some evil thing. All religions wish for the happiness of people and the World. To this kind of religion, by using the Croce di Pietro that can change everything 'in the most favourable manner', maybe it can destroy the wall between the magic and science sides, and lead humans to happiness?"

Hearing Oriana say this while she was toying around with her flashcard, Kamijou's lips curled up.

He stared at the damaged runway, and revealed a grim smile.

"Well said. Because I can't see the wall between the magic and science side, so this doesn't feel surreal to me, but I know this is a good thing. However—"

He paused at this moment, glanced at Stiyl who was still on the ground, and affirmed the strength in his five fingers.

He clenched his fist even tighter.

The human hand that could be used to do other things was now a weapon.

Kamijou said,

“To me, the balance of the science and magic side, as well as the domination of the world, those are just trivial things. What troubles me is that you’re using the Croce di Pietro here. Do you know what that means?”

“Hoho, of course I do. You think, what is this nee-chan working so hard for? It’s to use the Croce di Pietro to control Academy City. But you don’t have anything to worry about. Control isn’t such a nice word, but no matter what, everyone will be happy. And nobody would question that happiness, such a wonderful world is waiting…”

“I’ve never heard about this before!”

Rage could be implied from his tone.

He then silently and firmly exerted strength into his fist again.

“THAT ISN’T THE PROBLEM HERE!! THE TROUBLESOME THING IS THAT YOU HAVE DESTROYED DAIHASEISAI!! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? STOP USING THE MAGIC OR SCIENCE, MAGICIANS OR ROMAN CATHOLICS, CROCE DI PIETRO OR SOME LEGENDARY SPIRITUAL ITEM TO TRY AND CONFUSE ME!! YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT OTHERS WITH THESE BIG-SOUNDING WORDS!? ALSO, YOUR REASONING IS COMPLETELY INVALID, IT’S JUST SOME RADICAL SAYING!!”

Kamijou roared.

He faced the enemy in front of him.

“What am I thinking? It’s nothing compared to that gibberish that you’re saying. But even for an amateur like me, EVEN I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY!!”

He continued to shout at Oriana,

“So many people worked so hard for Daihaseisai, to make a wonderful memory out of today! So many people are taking part in Daihaseisai, and everyone put in all their efforts for this! WHY MUST IT BE DESTROYED BECAUSE OF YOU GUYS!?”

Every single word continued to motivate this boy.

Kamijou Touma used his entire strength to interrogate Oriana Thomson.

“No matter how stylish the religion is, can you beat these words now!? Is all the value that you are holding on worth this little!? For someone like you who can’t even break through this simple and boring logic, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TAKE WHAT’S VALUABLE TO OTHERS!!”

“…Thanks for your little suggestion.”

Oriana’s eyes lost their smiling expression.

It was a smile left behind after losing that happiness, the smile called cynicism.

“But, do you think that these sort of feelings can shake this nee-chan? If my thoughts are to be hurt just like this, this nee-chan wouldn’t have taken action in the first place.”

She continued to flip her flashcard around.

“So this nee-chan won’t stop here. I won’t be able to stop here as you please, understand?”

“…Just like that?”

“What?”

Facing a scowling Oriana, Kamijou continued,

“I don’t know what you’re trying to say to me, no matter what you’re trying to do to me, I won’t mind as long as it’s not overbearing. But,”

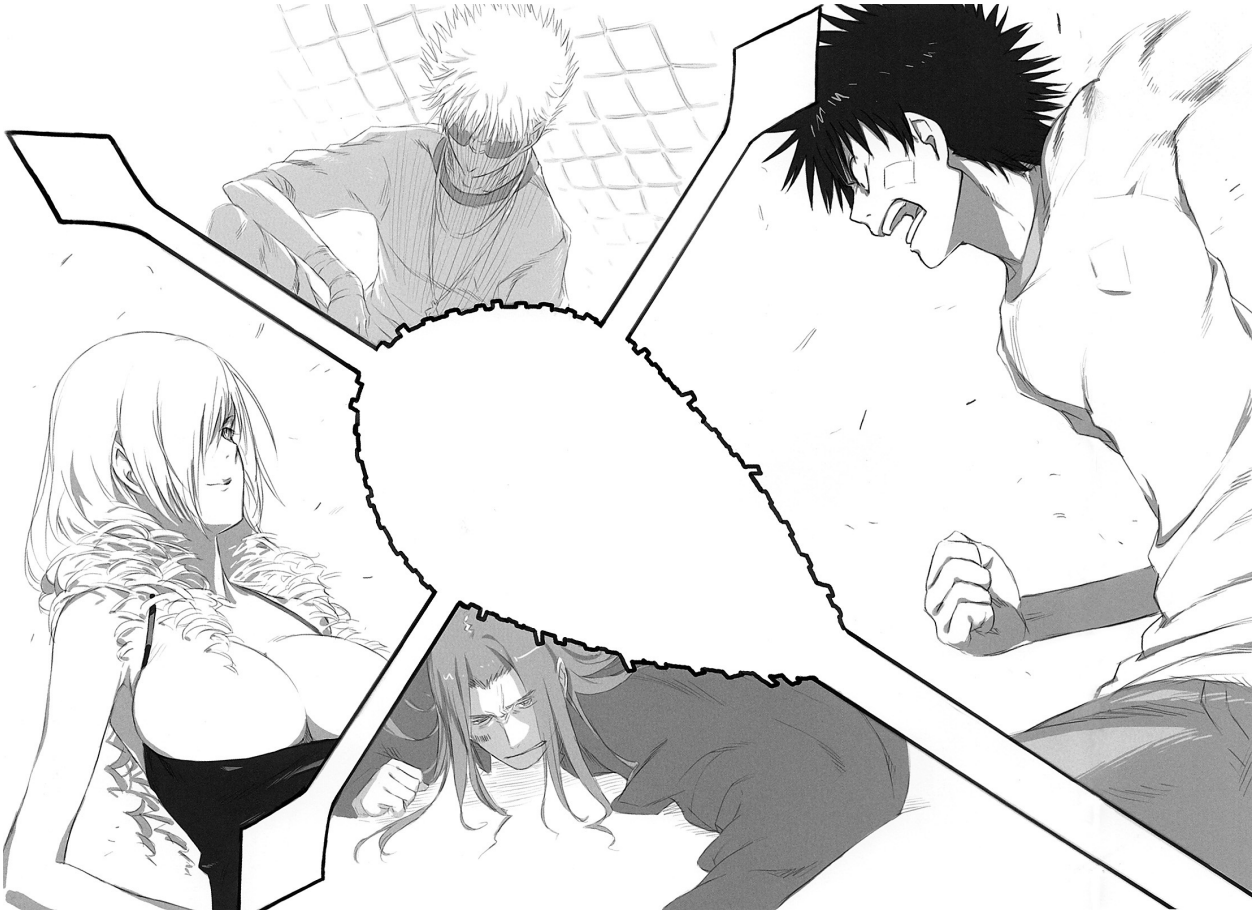
Kamijou paused for a beat,

“Just now, those words, can you say it in front of Fukiyose-san and Himegami, whom you injured?”

Oriana Thomson remained silent.

She revealed a smile that had half her face twitch.

“In the end, this is all I want to say. If you say that you’re not going to do anything else, then I won’t pursue this matter anymore. Hurry up, take the Croce di Pietro, and scram.”



Kamijou clenched his right fist.

Then he said,

“But, if you’re going to continue doing things in this city, and even intend on casting magic on those people who are injured and can’t move—”

A glow appeared in his eyes.

It was a strong light called will.

“—I’LL IMMEDIATELY SMASH THAT NONSENSICAL ILLUSION OF YOURS COMPLETELY!!!”

## Part 5

The sky was dyed red. The Croce di Pietro would be activated within the next hour. It could be five minutes later, or an hour later.

In the orange sky that was gradually turning purple, the first star started to shine. However, it was the only one shining. It was impossible to confirm the formation of the complex constellation.

Just when nobody knew when it was the end of the world.

Kamijou Touma and Oriana Thomson were engaging in a fierce fight.

“!!”

There were still around 3 meters left. Facing Kamijou, who was still clenching his fists, not letting go of his target, Oriana continued to maintain a minimum distance as she moved backwards, tearing another flashcard apart with her mouth.

The spell was activated.

Unnatural blue flames spurt out from the ground, getting between Kamijou and Oriana. However, Kamijou didn’t stop in his tracks, instead hitting the flame

wall with his right fist.

The flame wall seemed like it was going to avoid Kamijou's fist, as it bent backwards, forming a '<' shape.

"!!"

Kamijou's fist cut through the air, and the flames that were bending towards the sides strongly wrapped around his body.

His center of gravity was already tilting forward, and now he could no longer back away.

Even so, his right hand couldn't reach it.

There was not enough time for him to swing his right fist around to block whichever wall.

If so.

(Got to move forward…)

Kamijou gathered his strength on his feet that were going to be tripped up by the flame wall in front of him.

(A little further!!)

He continued to move forward like an arrow, swinging his fist at the deepest part of this '<' shaped wall.

PAM!! With the sound of a balloon being burst, the flame wall scattered all around.

Oriana Thomson was just ahead.

She tore another flashcard.

She completely ignored Stiyl, who was right beside her, aiming only at Kamijou.

But just as the spell was being activated, Kamijou leapt into Oriana's arms. The asphalt road spike that she originally intended to release fire from an unexpected

place, like attacking an enemy with artillery, using the largest angle.

This time, Kamijou clenched his right fist again, and swung it at Oriana's face again.

But,

Just as the fist was about to make contact, Oriana used those long legs of hers to trip Kamijou from the inside to the outside. Kamijou lost his balance, and the fist that was supposed to hit ended up hitting the sky. In order to avoid this fall, Kamijou placed a knee on the ground to support himself.

"Oh my, your head is in a rather embarrassing position."

Oriana slammed another kick into Kamijou's face.

"GYAA…AAHHH!?"

Kamijou couldn't help but cry out, as the spinning kick sent him flying aside.

(Not enough…)

Kamijou used the momentum as he rolled back up. At the same time, Oriana tore another flashcard. She tossed a softball-sized glass ball from her left hand. On the other hand, Kamijou picked himself up from the rubble of the asphalt ground, and did a flying tackle.

Clang!! The glass ball was destroyed. The fragments moved inwards, piercing through the rubble of the asphalt ground, landing straight onto the ground.

(Just this alone isn't enough.)

Kamijou used this time to rush back at Oriana.

In contrast, Oriana rushed back into Kamijou's arms at a terrifying speed.

"Wha…!!"

There was no time to even dodge or block.

Oriana, who was closing in at such a short distance, tore another flashcard with

her mouth. Her hand slipped from Kamijou's abdomen to his chest.

In that instant.

The feeling of a bluster. With a 'bam' blunt sound, Kamijou's body arched back in a '<' shape, and floated up with his chest as the center. He continued to gulp heavily down his throat, and as his feet left the ground by 40cm, he was completely unable to move around with his body.

"Dong."

With the sound of a fool being hit, Oriana sent another punch into Kamijou's chest.

"Eh…ugh…!!"

With a muffled sound, the fist sent Kamijou flying backwards by 3 meters.

(I can't beat Oriana with just this…!!)

Lying on the ground, his hands supporting him, Kamijou felt the bitterness as he gritted his teeth.

Oriana specialized in using close ranged combat with her body, and long ranged combat with her spells. No matter how much Kamijou waved his hands and feet around to fight, or how many times he missed by a step, it was like there was a protective barrier between both of them, his feet normally being dodged at the last minute.

If so, he couldn't attack Oriana like this.

No matter how much he tried to chase her, no matter how much he tried to hassle her, no matter how he desperately swung his fist, it was the same.

"Hoho! Seems like the sky's going to be dark soon."

Oriana Thomson closed in on Kamijou.

Such a seemingly defenseless action had in fact no blind spots.

(Damn it…)

Though it was too late, he realized that this was Oriana's battle plan. Oriana didn't use her best moves right at the start. She maintained an appropriate balance of power between the two of them, and when the enemy got carried away and missed, she gave a strong counterattack. This was probably a battle technique that she had learned to minimize the using of her spells, since she 'couldn't use spells that she had used before'.

She wasn't mocking the enemy.

To Oriana Thomson, it was the best blueprint for her.

"At this time, kids should be heading home, right? Or are you going to have an exciting night with this nee-chan?"

Facing Oriana, who was approaching him, Kamijou rolled on the ground, and maintaining a low posture, leaped up at Oriana.

The fierce conflict between these two was renewed.

Kamijou dodged and blocked the enemy's attack, but his fist still couldn't hit her.

(One more step…)

He clenched his fist, attacking from the blind spots, enduring the pain.

(There's still one step, if there's any…if there's any way to help me gain advantage!!)

He continued to swing his fist, strongly wishing.

Just like this, he continued to repeat this attack that seemed to be blocked by an invisible wall, one that couldn't hit the enemy.

## Part 6

Stiyl Magnus' consciousness was still murky.

(Ugh…ah…)

His world was upside down, his jaw felt painful, and he felt that he lost his balance. It took three seconds for him to realize that he had fallen.

The strength in his hands and feet was gradually recovering, but it was still too slow.

In contrast to his large physique, he didn't have the strength required for close-ranged combat. It wasn't because Stiyl didn't train himself, but rather it was a fundamental issue.

He was using rune cards and codified spells, which required a lot of magical power. Magic wasn't created from nothing, it was a power that could only be created by undergoing different magical exercises within the body.

To an ordinary magician, this wasn't too difficult for them. But for people who used a pope-level spell like Stiyl's Innocentius, it was a different thing altogether. Repeating the same mundane motion over and over again, and the magical 'activity' would pressurize Stiyl's body. Thus, he would use up more energy. In other words, this meant that his insides and outsides were working at the same time.

Unlike Kanzaki Kaori, he wasn't a Saint chosen by God.

Unlike Tsuchimikado Motoharu, he wasn't a genius magician who specialized in a certain type of spells.

Even so, he had a reason to fight.

Thus, he had learned all about these runes from the Christian organization and got the pope-level spell Innocentius. The price was that he had to abandon any possibility of close ranged combat, to the state where he couldn't light a fire without using rune cards.

But the reaction caused by this determination was now corroding his body.

(Damn…it…)

His consciousness was wavering.

In this situation, he could hear the sound of a fist being swung and spells colliding. That amateur was still fighting. Even if he was hit, even if he was knocked down, he wouldn't back down, he wouldn't give up. He would grit his teeth and clench his fist.

The amateur who he could never be like.

No matter how much time passed, he would never be able to reach that position.

Still,

"MTWOTFFTO (One of the five great elements from which the world is constructed). IIGOIIOF (The great flame of the beginning)."

He had the spells that he had learned in order to protect a certain girl.

To fight against those who trampled on that smile. For this purpose, he had endured blood-shedding pain to learn this flame magic. This was the result of him putting in all his effort to learn this magic, with a slight feeling pushing him forward.

"IIBOLAIIAOE (It is a light of blessing that raises life and a light of judgment that punishes evil)."

Stiyl Magnus knew.

Such a spell was already useless. There was already someone standing beside that petite girl. Thus, this spell was completely useless now.

"IIMHAIIBOD (It is overflowing with calm blessings and with freezing misfortune that destroys cold darkness)."

Even so, this spell was also able to protect people other than that girl.

For example, a wide-eyed teary petite girl whose hands were dyed in someone else's blood, and had to depend on something that was so completely useless and

such a stupid technique.

For example, a girl who was not a magician, but because she had a Cross on her chest, she had been misidentified as one, and was now in her own pool of blood.

“IINFIIMS (Its name is fire and its role is the sword).”

However, such an action wouldn’t bring Stiyl any consolation. It was like making a cake for your favorite person, only for it to be eaten by a complete stranger who tells you that “it’s delicious”. No matter how someone praised you for it, it couldn’t hide that empty feeling inside.

“ICR (Be manifest).”

Even so, if he helped them, he could still protect that certain girl’s smile in the end.

If protecting Academy City could protect that person’s smile,

Stiyl Magnus would gladly accept this task.

Using all his strength just to help some other unrelated people.

And because of this slight lingering feeling, he had to beat this enemy now.

“MMBGP (Become the power that eats into my body)—Innocentius!!”

From the insides of his robes, a large number of cards flew out. The runes flew out like a paper avalanche, and with him as the center, they stuck onto the cracked and devastated ground.

The flames shot out.

The flames were released like a red lotus, moving inwards, and disappearing. In the middle was a black humanoid figure, the 3,000 degree Celsius god was standing just beside him.

“…Go, Innocentius—”

The magician said as he slowly got up.

He supported himself with his hands and feet, standing up in a shaky manner.

Even so, he would not bend that axle of his body and soul.

He shouted out to the sky.

His magic name,

“FORTIS931!!”

The thing that he had sealed onto his soul, on this Innocentius that he had worked so hard to set up was…

(-"I PROVE WHY MY NAME IS THE STRONGEST HERE!!"-)

## Part 7

The sky was gradually turning deep purple.

As if ink had smudged through the back of a paper, the stars were starting to appear in the sky. Right now, there were two or three lights. In another 10 minutes, the sky would likely be full of stars. The stars wouldn’t start shining when it was night time, more accurately they were always shining, but didn’t really stand out because of the sun. Thus, as the sky grew darker, the first class stars, second class, third class, and so on would all appear in the sky.

As the glow of the night sky was about to appear.

Oriana Thomson glanced around and saw the light of the flames that covered the slightly dark sky.

“STIYL!!”

Kamijou noticed this abnormal change as well, but the other person carried a

smile that was different from Oriana, a cynical one, and without turning back, shouted out his own magic name. As if it was responding to him, the intensity of the light increased.

“!!”

Right now, Oriana was facing a pursuing Kamijou, as she continued to retreat. At this moment, the large humanoid figure got behind her, and made a sound that indicated that it was consuming oxygen. Its large orange arm swung down.

“This nee-chan…has no interest in getting tortured by a candle!!”

She moved aside, dodging Kamijou’s fist, and using this movement, moved to Kamijou’s right.

As if she was planning to use the boy as a shield, Oriana moved Kamijou around, using him to block the incoming flame god that was coming in from another side.

“…”

Stiyl, who was standing slightly farther away, frowned.

“Die together.”

“WAAHHH!!”

Kamijou frantically backed away, and after that, Innocentius’ right arm swung to the side. The abnormally long arm burned the back of Kamijou’s hair, aiming towards Oriana’s upper body.

Even though the boy was in a position where he would definitely be consumed by the flames.

“Wha…!!”

At the moment when a really surprised Oriana jumped back,

“THAT’S DANGEROUS, IDIOT!!”

This time, Kamijou swung a right hook at the giant flame god’s right arm. The

large arm was extinguished, but it then continued on in an abnormal manner.

3,000 degrees Celsius, hellish flames that would melt any skin on even the slightest contact.

(Ugh!!)

Even if she knew that it wouldn’t hit her, Oriana’s movements froze as the flames moved in an unexpected manner. In the meantime, Kamijou took a huge step and moved in front of her.

(Oh no…)

Just as Oriana was about to use her hand to block.

The fist that had all of Kamijou’s weight on it was swung towards her defense. Because of the explosive sound just now, Oriana had no time to dodge. Numbness and pain could be felt in both her hands.

“!!”

Oriana thought, this was really bad.

Oriana, who would normally maintain this distance and fight back with magic or physical objects, didn’t want this to become a simple grappling or punching match. Though she disliked the difference between genders, facing someone whose style of combat was to use his own fists, it was foolish for her as a female to fight physically when she normally fights intelligently.

Oriana was unable to interpret Kamijou’s movements, so she continued to move backwards, as if she was bending her body back.

“Ash to ash, dust to dust. Squeamish Bloody Rood!!”

A new flame blew everything apart.

Stiyl, who was holding a red flame sword in the right hand, and a blue one in the left hand, rushed in fast to Kamijou’s back.

(Oh no…!)

Oriana bit her tongue. Though being hit once or twice by the boy's fist wouldn't cause any critical injury, the flame swords were different. Their explosiveness was much more dangerous than their cutting capability, such that she would be reduced to nothing with even the slightest touch, not even her bones would be left.

(I should first settle that magician—)

Oriana's concentration moved from Kamijou to Stiyl.

"Eh…?"

Another one followed up.

As Stiyl continued to run, he tripped because of the debris on the asphalt floor.

"Go back home, you stinking magician!!"

Kamijou shouted as he extended his fist towards Oriana.

Oriana, who was stunned, immediately regained her concentration and protected her face.

"Shut up, amateur!"

Stiyl, who had fallen behind Kamijou, knocked the flame sword onto the ground. With a loud explosive sound, a large and strong gust surged forward like a wall. Kamijou, feeling the pressure come in from behind, lost his balance and missed his target.

The fist passed through the gap in Oriana's defense.

It hit somewhere slightly below the face—the middle of her chest.

Dong! It sounded like someone stamping hard onto the ground.

"Ke…Ah…AHHHHHH!!"

Oriana's breathing was interrupted, as she backed off and fell. She couldn't breathe properly as she continued to roll backwards, trying to maintain the distance. She wanted to tear a flashcard, but her mouth was trembling so much

that she couldn’t do it properly.

It was a direct hit.

The reason was simple, because she couldn’t anticipate Kamijou and Stiyl’s movements.

If they were just working individually, Oriana would definitely read them, lure them, counter them, and win without even a scratch.

But—

“Innocentius!”

Stiyl gave the instructions, and the giant flame god continued to advance. Just as Oriana was about to turn around and dodge, Stiyl moved in from behind and chanted a new spell.

“Kenaz (Flames). Purisaz Naupiz (A gift of pain for)—”

This was the spell that he needed to chant in order to create his main weapon, the flame sword. Just as Stiyl was about to pass by Kamijou, however,

“Stop blocking, idiot!”

“How about you get aside!!”

The duo’s teamwork rating was 0, as both their powers were obstructing each other. But their messy movements were still directed at Oriana.

(I can’t read them…!?)

She finally tore a flashcard after much difficulty and blocked the flame sword with the ice sword that she created. However, Kamijou knocked into Stiyl’s back, and was absolutely merciless towards his own ally. No matter what, it looked like he was attacking Stiyl. With this increase in force, Oriana heavily bent backwards. At this moment, the flame sword that Stiyl continued to use broke.

It was one thing if they were just assisting each other, but in this situation, they

were basically pulling each other down. It was like getting involved in their own battle. However, this made it harder to read.

As both sides weren't targeting Oriana, she couldn't tell when the real attack would come. The timing was extremely tight, it was like a bullet bouncing about in a small and enclosed room.

"WOOOHH…!!"

Oriana, who was still backpedalling, continued to swing her ice sword amidst this chaos.

She was aiming for Stiyl's waist.

However, this wasn't the real target. Even if the enemy could dodge the ice sword, she could instantly manipulate the ice particles and assimilate them into a sword, and redirect it in the direction where Stiyl dodged. In this situation, Oriana's wrists could no longer withstand the sudden change in center of gravity, and she nearly broke her wrists.

(Anyway, I have to hit you! Let this nee-chan's move render you weak on the waist!!)

The ice sword was attacking at a terrifying pace, piercing towards Stiyl's waist.

Just before that.

"!!"

Kamijou, who was behind, got in front and blocked the ice sword with his right hand. In an instant, Oriana's weapon was destroyed.

(Normally...they would be arguing. But to think that they would be helping each other even now?)

Before she could even express her surprise, Kamijou and Stiyl were already prepared to make their next move.

Kamijou Touma was bending low, readying his right hand.

Behind him, Stiyl Magnus was also clenching his fist.

Maybe both parties had no plans at all,

But this was a partnership formed by blind attacks on each other.

—Both of them were working together, launching their attacks at the same time.

Kamijou and Stiyl's fist were coming at the same time.

Oriana Thomson thought about which side should she be blocking, and responded too late.

Bonk!

Being punched in the face and abdomen, Oriana's body strongly flew back.

"Eh…ack…!!"

She slammed into the ground hard. She felt that she was showing an extremely ugly movement as she was knocked down. She couldn't breathe properly, her balance was unstable, and the strength was now gone from her legs.

In this blurry vision, Oriana saw it.

They were coming in from the front.

Obviously, she knew what the 'enemies' now would do if she was to let her guard down. Even if she knew this, Oriana couldn't get up due to the impact she had suffered. Her confused brain was unable to issue commands to her weak and powerless body.

(I lost…?)

She saw the flashcards which were attached to the metal ring, drop in front of her.

The flashcards which signified her power.

(I've…already…lost…?)

This fact made her hands even weaker. Amidst this blurry consciousness, she intended to hand her body over to this weakness that was striking like waves.

(The…solution, what would happen…)

A certain thing caught Oriana's attention, which was gradually heading towards darkness.

A doubt that she had repeated for countless times.

Oriana thought about it. She almost vomited it out, but swallowed it again.

She again reaffirmed the bitterness of that question.

(This…nee-chan…wishes…for an absolute solution…)

Regarding Oriana's actions, everyone had different views about them. Some were thankful, and some would leave in vengeance. What should she do? To not get the answer when she was troubled. Everyone had different views about it, what an individual did, somebody else would perceive it differently. No matter how firmly Oriana believed in her rules, not everyone would accept it, which would cause differences.

In this world, there was nothing that was absolutely correct.

As long as everyone had their own thoughts, this would happen.

(No matter whether it's the emperor, pope, president, fuhrer, prime minister, it doesn't matter. I want to fight for others…)

It was not that she didn't want to know the answer.

It was because there was no answer, that she decided to create her own answer.

An answer that nobody would doubt.

An answer that everyone would be satisfied with.

(I want to win…)

Oriana extended her trembling hand forward.

So she had been working hard till now. If so, what was Oriana doing here?

(…So, give me a clear guide. To be able to let everyone be happy, being able to avoid creating conflict due to the differences in values, I want such a wonderful world!!)

She again repeated this wish of hers.

Oriana opened her eyes.

The blood flowed into her head. Due to this reaction, her heart started to beat.

(I want to win…)

Oriana extended her trembling hand to the ground.

Her feet couldn’t move, she couldn’t support her own weight. Thus, she did something much simpler and yet more effective.

(I want to win, I want to create an answer! My…my name is—)

The flashcards attached to the gold ring were on the ground.

Oriana Thomson again grabbed the weapon which she had once let go of.

“—BASIS104—THE ONE WHO CARRIES THE FOUNDATION STONE!!”

## Part 8

Kamijou heard this cry.

It was not Japanese, nor was it in simple English. It was of an unknown foreign language.

Stiyl realized earlier than Kamijou the significance of that name.

“GET DOWN, AMATEUR!!”

Stiyl kicked Kamijou’s back, and without caring that he was on the ground, immediately summoned Innocentius, which was on standby. Just as the giant flame god covered his front like a shield.

Tch!

On the floor, Oriana Thomson used her mouth to tear another flashcard.

BOOM!!

Fresh blood scattered all over the place.

What Oriana released was an ice ball the size of a soccer ball. The ball left her hand, and from the center, exploded out. The large amount of shrapnel rained down in a fan-like shape.

The hail of blades almost pierced through Kamijou's head, as he still remained on the floor.

It then pierced through Stiyl Magnus, who was behind him.

The sound of these sharp blades cutting through flesh was unexpectedly hard and blunt.

Or was that the sound of bones breaking?

Stiyl bent down on his knees before lying flat on the ground. Blood was streaming out of his body. Innocentius painfully twisted its body before vanishing in all directions.

No words.

Not even a groan.

"St…"

Kamijou looked up in disbelief.

"STIYL—!!"

"Where are you going?"

A certain voice prevented Kamijou from getting to Stiyl.

Kamijou turned around. Oriana was standing 7 meters away from him, holding tightly onto the flashcards.

"Boy, your target…should be me, right…"

"You…you…"

Kamijou carelessly let this out.

The sky was gradually turning from purple to the dark blue of the night sky. There was almost no time left till the constellation appeared. Though the amateur couldn't really see when would the sun set completely, there seemed to

be around 5 minutes left.

The Croce di Pietro could be used.

This was the most important thing that he had to remember.

“Stop messing around. How many people do you want to hurt before you are satisfied?”

But this was what Kamijou Touma could let out first.

These words came out before his brain could even process them.

He couldn’t just leave Stiyl lying on the floor. However, Oriana was not giving him time to do any emergency procedures. Thus, he had to get rid of the person that was blocking him.

In contrast, Oriana smiled,

“This nee-chan is forced to do it anyway.”

That kind of expression looked empty, as if some part of it was blown away, and the rest of it was erased.

“I hate this, that’s why I have to battle. You people may think that I am stupid, but don’t look at me like that, I have my own reason. Come on, boy. You’re the last chess piece left to defend Academy City. As long as I beat you, this nee-chan’s mission is done. After that, the Roman Catholic Church’s Croce di Pietro will show what nee-chan wanted.”

“What…purpose?”

Kamijou exerted more force into his fingers.

“You already said that you’ll let others decide the future, and yet you’re talking so selfish and ignorant. Fukiyose fell, Himegami was attacked, Tsuchimikado’s hands and feet are injured, and Stiyl was used as a shield! These aren’t of your own intention, but under orders from the Roman Catholic Church? How can you let such shallow thinking take away other people’s happiness!?”

“This nee-chan is…”

Oriana carefully measured the distance as she silently muttered.

It was not that she had rigor left, but rather, she was trying to conserve her energy.

“…It’s alright no matter who it is. No matter whether it’s the Roman Catholic Church, or if it’s anyone else. It’s not important to listen to someone else, it’s the same as selecting a politician. To you little boy, should it be too hard? But, a politician and an artiste are different, right? A politician doesn’t choose by his own interests. As long as it’s someone who can make this nee-chan happy, it’s alright even if he’s the prime minister, right?”

She repeated her shallow breathing, as if she was going to cough out blood.

Oriana Thomson wasn’t someone without her own personal goals.

As long as she could achieve this personal goal, she was willing to listen to anyone.

“To be honest, this nee-chan has no qualms with being allies with Academy City. But because this nee-chan has links with the magic world, I turned out to be theirs…no matter what, the Croce di Pietro can fulfil this nee-chan’s wish.”

“Your aim? That’s the emperor who gets world domination, and becomes as stupid as an idiot?”

Facing Oriana, who was carefully measuring the distance, Kamijou didn’t care as he took another step forward.

As both of them had different viewpoints, Oriana let out a smile.

“That’s why I say, that is the business of this nee-chan’s superiors. This nee-chan isn’t unhappy about whoever’s giving the orders. As long as it can protect this nee-chan’s daily life, it’s alright no matter who gets dominated. Think about it, boy. On this planet, how many religions believe in considering good and evil?”

“…”

“The answer? Many, very many, so many that you can’t count them all. And the most fundamental thing is the Christian’s ‘Structure of faith’. After that, there are many more explanations. In the end, everyone has few morals. To simply put it, it’s like a ‘Roman Catholic, Oriana Thomson Sect’.”

Oriana held tightly onto the flashcard, as if she was going to crush it.

Like Kamijou, she took a step forward.

“I say, boy. There are many developments in this world that nobody can imagine. For example, giving a seat to an old lady while on a double decker bus, only to have a seat that’s used by a terrorist hidden underneath it. Or to bring a lost child back to Church, only to find out that he’s an escaped Anglican magician, and in the end, that child was sent to the execution tower. Listen to me, I just helped a child retrieve a balloon from a tree today, but is this really related to ‘happiness’? This nee-chan can’t really tell anymore.”

She said these words.

Matching the firmness in these words, Oriana again closed in.

There were still 6 meters left between them.

“Boy, can you imagine it? The feeling of realising that trap when everything’s over. Though I know I have to do it, I still get that feeling of seeing the person in front of me getting hurt when everything’s over. I can’t do anything, and yet I have to do something. Then what is this nee-chan supposed to do?”

Hearing this.

Kamijou Touma still continued to approach in a similar manner.

There were now 5 meters left between them.

“Don’t you find it strange? People should love their neighbours, and yet they can’t protect the person beside them. So this nee-chan hopes that anyone other than nee-chan, even if I don’t know who that person is, I hope that the person controlling this world from somewhere can give me the answer.”

Oriana gritted her teeth slightly.

As if she was trying to get rid of this bitter feeling, she again closed in.

There were now 4 meters left between them.

“It’s alright no matter who it is, please dominate and standardise the messed-up stands and views of this world.”

This was Oriana Thomson’s goal

Because of the word ‘coincidence’, Oriana, whose good intentions had been betrayed, didn’t want to be betrayed again, and didn’t want this sort of betrayal to hurt anyone beside her.

However, this goal was too great, it was impossible for Oriana alone to do it.

Thus, she was putting this hope onto someone stronger, more powerful, and superior.

An absolute solution.

In order not to create a tragedy because of a mistake, a misunderstanding, or just a brush through.

“This nee-chan…wants to protect everything.”

She made a stand.

As if she was going to use everything she had.

“Thus, I have to use the Croce di Pietro to take over Academy City. By doing this, all the expanding views will merge together.”

What Oriana wanted to say was ‘get out of my way’, not to get involved in this, and her own way was the ‘right’ way, thus many people would be saved, and there was nothing to refute it. She was expressing all these ideas wordlessly, like a wall ahead.

However,

“Is this all what your ‘goal’ is about?”

Kamijou took another huge step forward.

There were now 3 meters left between them.

“If so, then someone like you is too cheap. I know that you aren’t a bad person, but to call yourself justice is too cheap. To go for this level of ‘goal’, to hand over everyone in Academy City over to you, I won’t allow it.”

“What did…you…say?”

Oriana’s eyebrows collapsed.

This minor change destroyed her beautiful round face.

“Boy, stop saying this when you haven’t seen the real world yet. There’s no anguish, groans, or cries of rage, not even the sound of someone begging for forgiveness… there’s just ‘discontent’! There’s no hope for a 10-year old child, there’s no despair for a 100-year old person! Both of them can only look stunned as everything happens around them! Just because you have never seen that expres—”

“If it’s just that.”

Kamijou interrupted her and took another step forward.

There were now two meters left between them.

“This is still no reason to just choose Academy City as an attack target. To use an excuse like jumping off a building because of someone, such a fact has never changed. Never.”

—For example, a lady named Orsola Aquinas.

She specialized in evangelizing the Gospel to unknown land. In the past, a certain nun named Agnese Sanctis had mentioned this. Was this the result of trying to unite all the ideals and faiths that were going about, working hard to ensure that everyone’s happy?

—For example, a boy named Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He should know that no matter how humans try, it was impossible to unite society as a whole. Thus, he chose to work for Academy City and the Anglican Church in the shadows, trying to ease the differences and misgivings with society that most people would easily have.

Even if their methods were different.

Their actions were to protect those who were there for them.

These things called thoughts weren't something that could be classified crudely by religion or international borders.

If one's values and stand had a form, everyone would have it. Though this thing may cause conflicts, on the other hand, it caused conflicts because it was important.

No matter who the person was, there were some things that people could not let aside.

It was because Orsola and Tsuchimikado knew this that they wouldn't go over that line. They wouldn't choose to step over the line like that, to destroy the values that other people had, to use a simple method that only benefited oneself. They wanted to use their own methods to confront other people's values and beliefs.

Thus, Kamijou said this.

It was his own values, stand and beliefs that had been shaped through pain.

"Your questions are something that everyone feels, and everyone's way of dealing with it is different. It's not because of a large 'goal', and I could have granted your wish without any conditions."

Kamijou said as he clenched his fist tight, moving forward at the same time.

There was now only one meter left between them.

"I don't know such difficult things like having a personal viewpoint and values. But, I hate it when Stiyl and Tsuchimikado are hurt. I want to go out and see the Night Parade with Index and Himegami, I want to run wild and have fun with

Aogami Pierce and Komoe-sensei. If all these can be combined together into a ‘thought’, I’ll do my best to protect it.”

There were now at a distance where a punch could connect.

“There are many things that I’m also unable to succeed in. It was the same with Agnese. However, even if I were to stay around and do nothing, it’s not going to do anything! Even if I fail and fall, when I fall, the events will still carry on. I tell myself to get up and protect the others! No matter what the outcome is, no matter how everything doesn’t go the way I plan it, even so, those who are hurt by the people who betrayed them should have more reason to stand back up! The most important thing is that everyone can laugh and have a wonderful life!! You have no right to abandon other people’s lives midway through!”

Kamijou Touma finally said,

“—What do you want now, Oriana Thomson? To hand yourself over to others just because of a single mistake? Or are you going to make that mistake and after that, helping others who made the same mistake!?”

“Ha.”

Oriana laughed.

This was different from the previous ones. There was no sense of danger hidden in it, it was a very ordinary smile.

After that, she inhaled deeply.

“!”

She tore another flashcard.

A certain spell was activated, but Kamijou swung his right fist at the spell’s main body.

An explosion occurred between them, and both of them were sent flying away by the power of the Imagine Breaker. A bluish-white flash occurred during this shockwave, as Kamijou inadvertently backtracked by 2 to 3 steps. Oriana followed suit as well.

The distance between the two increased back to 3 meters.

Oriana pulled the flashcard to her mouth, but this time, she was not just using one spell. Instead, she pulled the metal ring that was attached to all these thick pieces of paper.

Several pieces of flashcards were released all of a sudden.

Oriana swung her right arm that was holding the metal ring to the side.

“With this, everything will be over.”

The pieces of paper were scattered around like snow.

In a horizontal manner, text font words appeared on these pieces of paper like blades appearing on snow.

In pitch black, the words read ‘All of Symbol’.

“Using all my talents—”

As if she was repeating this sentence, the avalanche of paper created a pure white explosion. The flash distorted itself like melted candy, grafting onto Oriana’s right arm. The explosive flash that stopped there looked like it was trying to resist getting pulled by Oriana, like stretched-out chewing gum.

Oriana pulled her right arm back.

“—Release all the souls and destroy the enemy ahead!!”

After that, she strongly swung her arm down like she was pitching, and a strong white-colored explosion occurred beside Kamijou.

BOOM!! Oriana heard this sound.

The white light that was stretching like candy maintained its shape as it swung around. There was no definite shape, and this contraption would often change into random shapes. With its movements, the air that touched the light was sucked in at an extremely fast speed. It was unknown which one was distorted, the light or the gravity, as the scene in front suddenly changed.

The real identity of that white light was a large ‘gravity’.

All the matter that touched the light was sucked in and crushed by the pressure. As all the matter was being compressed in such a short time, from the outside, it looked like it was being eaten by a large space.

As all the air had been removed, in order to fill up the void left behind, all the gas matter started to move about violently, and even the original light and gravity would be sucked in.

(Come on.)

Oriana waved all her flashcards to create her largest spell, showing a smile of despair. A flash of light started moving in a clockwise direction, aimed at Kamijou. Seeing the asphalt road being dragged up by the air and being crushed by the light.

(If so, everything ends here, right?)

Facing this strike that was coming in horizontally, the boy swung his right hand up without hesitation.

“WOO—OOOOOOOOHH!!”

He released a cry.

With the sound of glass breaking, the pure white light broke apart upon touching that hand.

Hearing the sound of something being spat out,

Whoosh!

Everything that had been compressed in the white light released.

“!!”

As Kamijou hadn’t foreseen this happening, his thoughts went blank.

Like air.

An air body flying about all over the place like the mouth of a balloon being released, regaining its original shape, and the force released blasted against Kamijou like a storm.

Like the asphalt road.

The pieces of rock that had been crushed by the huge pressure, and were now stones the size of beans, like popcorn regaining its original size. The stone pieces that were released were now riding the storm and acting like bullets.

The stone storm continued to rage.

With a blunt ‘tong’, a piece of the asphalt road the size of a fist hit Kamijou’s right fist. Before he could even feel pain, more stones directly hit his abdomen, chest, thighs—till the moment the back of his head was hit; he couldn’t even feel pain anymore.

(This…person…to think that she actually predicted that…it would be destroyed by the Imagine Breaker…!?)

“GYYAAAAHHHH!!”

With blood scattered all over the place, and the feeling of his skin getting peeled, Kamijou’s body was about to fall to the side. He knew that his vision was tilted slightly, but he didn’t know what could be done to correct it.

As his thoughts started to vanish, Oriana, who finished using all her flashcards, came running over.

She was planning to deal the final blow. Not by magic, but to crush Kamijou’s bones with her fist that was as hard as granite.

The strength in his legs was gradually disappearing.

It was difficult for him to even stand.

In this situation, it would be impossible for him to even block Oriana’s attack, let alone dodge.

If he was going to be hit like that, Kamijou’s body would be crushed.

(Damn…it…)

—Fukiyose Seiri said,

Have you ever thought about making Daihaseisai a success?

—Himegami Aisa said,

Komoe-sensei and Stiyl are arguing, please come and stop them.

—Stiyl Magnus said,

Don’t expect too much.

—Tsuchimikado Motoharu said,

If we catch her here, everything will be over.

The thing that each of them actually wished for was all to preserve the smiles of the people, both the citizens of Academy City and the tourists who were there for Daihaseisai. Though the scale and quality may differ, everyone wanted to maintain and protect the lives that they had now.

Kamijou himself had said it before.

He had told Himegami Aisa, who was on the ground in blood, that he would go to her room before the Night Parade started. This wasn’t just a battle with this magician, it was also the realization of having to battle for others.

This was regarding the feelings of these people who express their own views.

(How can I—)

With his shaky consciousness, Kamijou gritted his teeth.

Forcefully.

(HOW CAN I LET IT END HERE—!!!)

“GYA…AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!”

His legs finally started to move.

His vision that was tilted to the side was supported by the earth.

Oriana Thomson was just ahead.

She was about to swing her fist down.

“Wh…why!?”

Her eyes widened in surprise. Most likely, she hadn’t expected a counterattack. Oriana, who was focusing on attacking, didn’t have time to set her defense up.

In his blurry consciousness, Kamijou Touma clenched his right fist in a refined manner.

Forcefully, firmly, not willing to let go.

After that.

Both parties exchanged fists.

Kamijou Touma’s strike hit Oriana directly on the face.

The magician’s body rolled backwards in a forceful manner.

## Part 9

Oriana Thomson was on the ground, not moving at all.

At this moment, Kamijou knew that the boundary that she set up had vanished. The engines could be heard as the planes buzzed around, as if he suddenly recalled something.

The surrounding runway of the experimental airbase looked like it had been plowed through, the control tower and support frames were bowled down. The mini-plane in the air finally hovered up frantically. After a while, Anti-Skill would arrive.

“Stiyl!!”

Kamijou shifted his body that was completely covered with wounds to the rune magician, who was lying far away. Stiyl was covered in ice fragments, and now the ice was almost melted. Maybe it was because the ice block that was covering the wound had melted, there was more blood flowing out of the wound.

Stiyl couldn’t get up.

But, as he lay on the ground, his eyes started to blink slowly.

“…Don’t worry…about me, I can do this on my own.”

He moved his bloody lips.

“More importantly, the Croce di Pietro, force Oriana…to say where…it is…our ultimate objective…is to prevent that spiritual item from activating…”

“But!”

Just as Kamijou was looking around, looking for something that could be used as a bandage.

“There’s nothing to worry about. Everything will be over soon.”

He could hear a voice.

It was the voice of a female. One that seemed older than Oriana.

Kamijou looked around, there was no new person around. The voice came from near where Oriana was lying.

“…The boundary that prevents communication is cut…”

After much difficulty, Stiyl managed to say these words.

Kamijou thought, this must be a spell meant to replace a wireless walkie-talkie or cell phone.

(If so, the one speaking is…)

Lidvia Lorenzetti.

Like Oriana Thomson, she was also responsible for planning to activate the Croce di Pietro inside Academy City, the person who wanted to dominate this entire area to take over the entire science faction.

She said,

“After a while, the Croce di Pietro will activate. Academy City will work to the Roman Catholic Church’s favor. Thus, you don’t have to worry even if you’re hurt. No matter what, including those wounds, the entirety of Academy City will be reversed.”

That meant,

The Croce di Pietro was not with Oriana, but with Lidvia.

At the same time,

“YOU PLAN TO GET RID OF US MEDDLERS HERE!?”

Kamijou inadvertently shouted out.

Lidvia remained unmoved as she said,

“You seem to be mistaken. I just want to say, we’ll take care of your wounds, and treat you. Of course, if these are beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church.”

What?

Kamijou couldn’t help but frown.

“…Ignore her, Kamijou Touma.”

Stiyl, who was on the ground, softly whispered.

“Since they’re going to use the Croce di Pietro, Lidvia and the spiritual item should be somewhere close by. With your right hand, you can definitely destroy all the spiritual functions. So hurry, Lidvia should be somewhere near this runway—”

“—To avoid any misunderstandings, let me tell you first.”

Lidvia seemed to intend to shut Stiyl up as she said,

**“The Croce di Pietro is not in Academy City.”**

“What...did you say?”

Kamijou inadvertently turned to look at Oriana, who was on the ground.

Lidvia’s voice, which was coming from there, coldly stated,

“You people seemed to have checked all the ‘**Belvederes**’ in Academy City, but that was just a decoy.[1] Seems like you weren’t able to consider the ‘observatories’ outside Academy City.”

The outside.

It took several seconds for Kamijou and Stiyl to understand these words.

“The Holy See, which was created by the Croce di Pietro, once occupied 47,000 square kilometers of land at its peak. Right now, it’s at 200 square kilometers. Of course, we have calculated, even if it’s outside Academy City, it can take over the entire city.”

“Damn it.”

Stiyl blurted out these words.

Now lying on the ground, he couldn’t even move his limbs as he would like.

“We…were tricked, Kamijou Touma…hurry up and contact Tsuchimikado! Oriana must have…purposely attracted our attention…right from the beginning!!”

“That’s right. Her mission is to investigate the related personnel and combat

capability, and to divert all the attention in the wrong direction. If she really wanted to hide, she could have used the people clearing field or any spell that can remove her presence. However, there won't be any fish if there's no bait. Thus, she purposely appeared here."

The nun's voice steadily continued.

"It takes a long time to use the Croce di Pietro, but the main point is that the 'Belvedere' has to be fixed. The most worrying thing is for all your main combatants to know where all the 'Belvederes' are beforehand."

Lidvia Lorenzetti calmly revealed the truth,

"To us, it's important to prevent this from becoming the focus, so Oriana purposely moved around Academy City, doing things that looked like there was a purpose behind them, to force all your combatants to focus solely within Academy City. I have the Croce di Pietro, and before the time came, I was waiting in a hotel outside Academy City all this while, and in fact, the Croce di Pietro was to be set up outside Academy City. Seems like our plan wasn't discovered."

"This…"

Kamijou gritted his teeth, but he couldn't think of any specific countermeasure.

"I wanted Oriana to not use a people clearing field or a presence cut spell. At first, when the Silent Coin was destroyed, it was the preparation phase to begin battle. That time, we panicked. If Oriana was caught too early, we wouldn't be able to achieve our objective."

To plan out all this elaborately, was it because she had all the trumps?

Lidvia's voice continued to ring inside Kamijou's ears.

"Too bad. Unfortunately, she was beaten. However, the Croce di Pietro will change this situation such that it would be beneficial to us. In conclusion, her failure is nothing but a trivial matter. As long as we can use the Croce di Pietro from outside Academy City to take over Academy City, we can turn this situation around, and it will end up being as we planned it in the beginning."

Though Lidvia's words were mild, they made Kamijou feel that all their efforts up till now had been wasted.

Kamijou used his trembling hand to pull the cell phone from his shorts pocket. Just as he was looking for a record of Tsuchimikado's number on the cell phone display,

"It's useless."

Most likely, besides the voice, it also showed what was going on. Lidvia dully said,

"For you to try and locate me now, it's a little too far. Even if you have reinforcements on the streets, I believe that everything would be over before they could arrive."

"…(The long range strike… Red Spell won't work?)"

Stiyl continued to lie on the ground as he spoke in a barely audible voice.

"…(First seeking, then attacking. Right now, Tsuchimikado is unable to…use spells consecutively. We're lucky if he can even squeeze one off with his current state…)"

"Damn it! What can we do now!?"

Kamijou roared, but he couldn't think of any concrete plan to fight back.

In this atmosphere of despair, only Lidvia Lorenzetti's voice echoed throughout.

"How do you view the changes to Academy City after the Croce di Pietro is used?"

Hearing this, Stiyl moved his lips.

"…Compared to Sodom and Gomorrah (Note: These were the legendary cities that indulged in promiscuous acts. God sent sulphur and fire down onto these cities, destroying all the land, the people, and even the living things down there.) …it might be a little better. But what you people are doing…is no different from destroying those cities. To the Roman Catholic Church, you'll send all those

irritating places…into oblivion, and then use force to display God's power…at his end, St. George…did something similar to the Roman Temple."

"This is your misunderstanding."

Lidvia immediately said,

"To us, the most important thing is to yield the rampant science faction, that's all it is. Right now, science is arrogant, like the old Roman pagans. So we have to act like what they did in the past, to deny all of what they believe in, to use our power to demonstrate God's authority."

Her tone had changed.

The words that were cut halfway were now completely linked up.

"Science's views, science's views, science's views…the word 'science' here is no longer just simple knowledge, but a pagan cult in itself. Unfortunately, people will just believe the words 'Science's views' without any condition. They never used their own eyes to confirm it, how stupid is that?"

That true, Science may have been heading in the wrong direction at times.

Even if Science was correct, how could anyone say that Science was the absolute truth? One had to think through it before calling it Science.

Common knowledge and Science—if so, would continue to improve over time. Till 1930, nobody had discovered Pluto. That had also been a time where people said that blue-ray diodes were impossible.

Even if Science was correct, the scientific framework may be imperfect. If one was to add in the words 'Science is correct' without thinking, it was like saying that 'the teacher is never wrong'.

"We feel that it's the science side invading the Church, and so we can't let this slide. Human hands have stained God's almighty name, so it's right to clean with human hands, right?"

Kamijou didn't even bother with Lidvia's words.

It was impossible to talk with her.

Kamijou pulled out his cell phone and confirmed the time. The moment he looked up at the sky, the sky had turned completely purple.

Like ink smudging through the paper, stars were scattered everywhere in the sky.

This was the worst situation.

It was almost over.

“We’ll take you in, and won’t destroy Academy City. Such a boring festival like Daihaseisai is only a perfect demonstration site for us to force the science side to submit to the Church. We’ll let you forsake this pagan religion before accepting you as our dear fellow comrades.”

Stiyl moved his wounded body and pulled a blood-stained rune card from his arms. Like Lidvia, he may have been trying to use a communication spell.

“Go…call…Tsuchimikado.”

Stiyl tried to squeeze out a voice.

“…It’s called the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’, right? That spell that searched out Oriana’s interception spell. Use it on Lidvia’s message, and find out where she is. After that, I’ll use my communicating spell, and call my allies outside to…”

“There’s no use. There’s only 120 seconds before the Croce di Pietro is used. No, it’s 107 seconds now. I can say this now: checkmate.”

107 seconds.

Even if they found out where Lidvia was, nobody could get there. They would use up all their time by just calling the injured Tsuchimikado here.

Stiyl Magnus gasped.

On the other side of the communicating spell, Lidvia Lorenzetti revealed a smile.

Kamijou gritted his teeth as he looked up at the purple sky that was becoming starry.

(Is there any way…)

The feeling of not giving up continued to circle around him.

(…IS THERE AN ULTIMATE TRUMP CARD THAT CAN REVERSE THIS SITUATION!!)

Kamijou racked his brain as if he was desperately grasping at straws. —The Croce di Pietro, the most important spiritual item that the Roman Catholic Church had could take over 47,000 square kilometers of land. It was a spell that used constellations, not using just the constellation's location, but its appearance in the night sky. After investigating the characteristics and features, they had chosen the most effective one out of the 88 constellations, and now they were ready to collect the starlight on the ground.

"—!!"

Kamijou Touma grabbed his phone.

"Tsuchimikado! Don't ask anything. Listen to me. How many possible places outside Academy City can they use the Croce di Pietro and still take over Academy City!?"

"Wha…at are you…saying, Kami-yan?"

This interrupted voice probably indicated that he did not know what was going on here.

However, Kamijou had no time or intention to elaborate. He again shouted,

"NO NEED TO EXPLAIN THE SPECIFICS. AMONG ALL THE CONDITIONS THAT I MENTIONED, WHERE'S THE FURTHEST POINT!?"

"…There should be 5 of them outside. Among them…the one furthest away is north of Academy City, about 1,700 meters away…Kami-yan, what's going on…"

"Sorry, Tsuchimikado, I don't have time to explain it."

After apologizing, Kamijou hung up the phone, ignoring the other person's

questions. After that he activated the search function of his communication function. It was the electronic version of the Daihaseisai tour guidebook.

(I know the distance. The time…there's 55 seconds left. Can it work!!?)

"Right now, it's impossible to do anything. So let me destroy that last hope of yours, I'm now no longer at that aforementioned location."

Kamijou ignored that voice which seemed to be lying as he continued to operate his phone desperately.

On the display, it was the map of Academy City.

(Not this.)

Kamijou closed the tab and opened a new one.

(Not this. Not this either.)

He closed the screen, and opened another one. This map was only meant for those who had lost their guidebooks and needed information, so it couldn't fit in all the contents of that thick guidebook. It was inconvenient too, and Kamijou still couldn't find the information that he wanted.

Even so, Kamijou continued to work on the phone.

When he finally saw the display, the phone in his hand dropped.

Klak Klak.

The light sound of plastic dropping rang on the evening runway. But, that was just it. Kamijou wanted to pick up the phone, but he couldn't do so. His trembling fingers couldn't move successfully, and he couldn't even do a simple action.

There were still 40 seconds till everything was over.

These last moments would just be wasted by Lidvia's words.

"No matter what, no matter what method you use, it's impossible to get to where I am now."

She continued in her polite tone, as if she was bowing over and apologizing.

“Everything is over. Including you people, I’ll make this world a better place.”

As if he had given up, Kamijou let out a ‘ha’ laugh.

“That’s right, everything is over.”

There were still 20 seconds left.

“Ahh, damn it, saying that I’ll keep my promise.”

In his vision, it was not the stars that were about to appear.

“That’s right. Even though I was confident and agreed with Himegami, I ended up like this. I’m really disappointed.”

He looked at the cell phone that was lying on the ground.

“You think so too right, Lidvia?”

There were still 5 seconds left.

“Even when I have broken your illusion.”

“What?”

Just as Lidvia raised her doubt.

Dong!!

A strong bright light appeared from the ground, and the darkness in the night was eradicated immediately.

It was the light released by the light bulbs, neon lights, laser lights, focus lights and many more that were set up all over Academy City. Though District 23 had nothing to do with Daihaseisai, the nearby International Airport started to shine like the decorative lights on a Christmas tree. Fast-paced music could be heard from afar with many electronic tunes. It sounded like the background music at a children’s theme park.

“It’s exactly 6:30 PM now.”

Kamijou Touma picked up his cell phone, and looked at the screen.

On the simple digital edition of the guidebook, the words were written ‘Night Parade’.

“Don’t you know when the Night Parade starts?”

“What…”

Light continued to cover Academy City.

Before he realized it, the stars that had been shining in the night sky vanished upon the appearance of the ground lights. It was like a metropolis, where it was impossible to see the stars due to all the light. The weaker starlight was absorbed into the strong floodlights.

“Really…I already promised Himegami to visit her at the hospital before this starts, and in the end, I still couldn’t make it. Damn it, I really lost face there.”

Kamijou clicked his tongue bitterly.

“That’s right. According to Tsuchimikado, the furthest location outside Academy City which can still take over Academy City is about 1,700 meters away. If it’s just that distance, with this large amount of light in Academy City, it should cover the entire sky.”

Then, Kamijou continued,

“If even the furthest place can be covered, no matter where you are, the other places will be covered as well, right? Lidvia Lorenzetti.”

“__”

The remaining 5 seconds had passed.

But there was still no change to the world.

“Thinking about it, we’re all boring supporting roles.”

This was the moment when a most-powerful spell that used starlight,

Succumbed to all the artificial light released.

“For me, not being able to catch you now, I can’t say anything big. But didn’t you not look down on Daihaseisai’s authority? Haven’t you now lost to all the light that everyone released? The security system, what balance between Science and Magic, these are all decorations for today. You should have checked out who’s the main character for Daihaseisai.”

It was not Kamijou Touma, it was not Stiyl Magnus, it was not Tsuchimikado Motoharu, it was definitely not Oriana Thomson, and definitely not Lidvia Lorenzetti. They were Fukiyose Seiri, who wanted Daihaseisai to succeed, Himegami Aisa, who was in her own blood due to coincidence, Tsukuyomi Komoe, who was crying as she tried to save her student who was drowning in her own blood.

These people gathered together to protect Daihaseisai.

Using this large amount of light. The intention to use this light to create wonderful memories.

“…”

Facing Kamijou’s words, the other party had no reply.

Right now, what was Lidvia thinking as she looked up at the sky?

“So how? Seems like you can’t shake Daihaseisai anymore, right? I don’t know anything about the power balance between the science side and the magic side, but if you destroy the Croce di Pietro, get out of here quietly, and not do anything to Academy City, I won’t have anything with that. What do you think?”

“…You think so?”

A low tension could be felt in Lidvia’s voice.

It felt like she would explode the moment she moved a finger.

“I’m a respected Roman Catholic, and I don’t feel that I did anything wrong to

Academy City. It’s meaningless to accept your proposal.”

“Really?”

Kamijou quietly replied.

He shifted his vision slightly.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu was climbing over the fence and approaching. The only man who could use a spell to detect the magic source was slowly moving over.

Even if Tsuchimikado was to accurately find the ‘observatory’ where the Croce di Pietro was used, before Kamijou and company could head there, Lidvia would likely escape with the Croce di Pietro. It was already difficult for them while they had their chase, and there was a considerable time and distance for them to cover in order to get outside.

But, there were many magical organizations of different sizes waiting for this opportunity outside the city.

No matter what they thought about Academy City, it was a righteous cause for them to capture Oriana and Lidvia. And also, it was disturbing that the whereabouts of the Croce di Pietro was still unknown. Regarding this, they would be able to settle the situation regarding Lidvia by asking for help from the Anglican Church.

Thus,

By using the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ that Tsuchimikado prepared, letting Stiyl know the source of Lidvia’s communicating spell, contacting the Anglican reinforcements that were waiting outside Academy City, and then letting them do their thing, everything would be over.

Besides that, Kamijou Touma had nothing else to do.

Finally, he laughed, and said,

“Go run and scamper around as if you’re running in a sports meet, Lidvia Lorenzetti.”

# Epilogue: The Awaiting People after the Conclusion. *Those_Who_Hold_Out_a_Hand.*

The sun had completely set, and the Night Parade was in full swing.

Anti-Skill, who had come rushing over, discovered Kamijou and company wounded, and sent them over to the hospital. It would not have been strange for them to have sent them to a hospital that had metal window, but for some reason, they had been sent to the hospital that Kamijou was at. Considering that the school districts were different, the higher ups may have exerted some pressure, but right now, Kamijou was unable to think about this.

Upon receiving contact, both of Kamijou's parents, Touya and Shiina seemed to have waited in the waiting room for their son's operation to be over. Most likely, both of them were tired from watching the matches that were going on during Daihaseisai; and once the hospital staff finished treating these wounds, both of them were so tired that they were now on the couch, lying on each other's shoulders. Kamijou had immediately asked a nurse to put a blanket on them.

"…In other words, Touma didn't say anything to me, and went off to fight a magical battle that involves the fate of the world and Academy City, and got so badly wounded that he was sent back to the hospital again?"

Index, who had already changed back into her nun's habit, coldly stared at Kamijou. Kamijou, who was kneeling on the patient's bed, said,

"Index-san, why, as the patient, am I forced to kneel on a hospital bed?"

"Touma, Touma. Can I punch you?"

I'M SORRY!! Kamijou immediately bent over, put his head into the soft blanket, and apologized. The combination of clenching his right fist and the cute action of bending his head down looked really scary.

Index unhappily raised her head.

Kamijou, who sensed this crisis, lifted his head up and revealed a smile, trying to get on Index's good side.

"But…but that's that. Stiyl and Tsuchimikado are all right. And Index, wasn't there a good reason why you couldn't take part in this battle?"

"Then before that, Touma?"

Am I digging my own grave? Kamijou again bent down to beg for forgiveness.

Showing a really unhappy face, Index said,

"Even if there's a magic searching spell placed around me, do you really think that I can't do anything? I can use a handphone or something to call you and give you advice!!"

"I can't agree with you on that, Index! You don't even know how to charge up a zero-yen phone, it makes it impossible for me to imagine you using a phone. Also, the moment you hear that a magician is involved, even without me saying anything, you'll immediately 'dongdongdong' rush over to the center of these events!!"

"Dongdongdong!? Touma, why do I feel that your explanation seems to imply that I'm an idiot!?"

"Peh, for you to not even realize that is…I'M JOKING! I'M JOKING! I'M JOKING!!"

Seeing Index, who was revealing her teeth, Kamijou Touma was terrified such that his skin was tingling.

"Wait a second, Index! Aren't you going to graduate from that kiddy method of biting others to become a mature female?"

Kamijou purposely used the words 'kiddy' and 'mature woman' to shake Index up. Hearing this, the nun Index, who was climbing onto the bed, intending to bite Kamijou's head, suddenly stopped.

“…Touma, can you understand why I am so angry?”

“Eh? Aren’t you angry because I left you alone for the whole day—”

“Itadakimasu![2] Thank you for your hospitality!!”

Eh!? Don’t tell me she’s angry because of this…!? Kamijou swallowed the cry of despair that he was going to let out. Overcoming the bitterness and embarrassment, Index again took a step forward and bit onto Kamijou’s head with even more force.

Kamijou continued to struggle on the bed.

“I’LL DIE!! I’M SORRY FOR FEELING THAT THAT WAS SOMEWHAT NOT ENOUGH IN THE PAST! THIS IS ALREADY PAST MY TOLERANCE LEVEL!!”

“Stop saying things that will confuse others, and reflect on this properly! I was really worried about you!!”

Just as Kamijou’s head was getting bitten, the door to the patient’s room opened, and new visitors walked in.

Misaka Mikoto and Shirai Kuroko.

“That…er, about that, I came over to look for Kuroko, and decided to come over in the meantime. There seems to be some fruit left…eh?”

“Ara ara, this is truly a pleasant scene.”

On first glance, the girl on the patient bed was biting onto the boy’s face from the front, and it looked like the boy’s face was pressed onto the girl’s chest. (Well, from a bystander’s viewpoint at least.)

Sitting on an athletic-type wheelchair, Shirai placed a hand on her face.

“Ahh, you guys are already so intimate that you forgot the timing and location now! These two are really unbelievable, to be at such a high level…come to think of it, onee-sama, to coincidentally see such a thing, what should we do? I’m somewhat embarrassed.”

DOES IT LOOK LIKE THAT!?

Just as Kamijou was about to shout this,

“I’m very serious now, stop meddling, short-hair!”

(Index-san!?)

“—”

The fruit basket that Mikoto was holding dropped onto the floor.

She immediately became expressionless.

“Kuroko…? Can an ordinary citizen help Judgment in maintaining discipline? I have a proper reason to prevent impure interaction between opposite genders here. Can I send this male here flying…?”

“Mm. Please kindly adjust this mister’s rotten character— WA! TOO SCARY!? ONEE-SAMA, TO START THESE SPARKS, THAT’S A LITTLE TOO MUCH!! THIS IS A HOSPITAL!!”

“Ah, I see.”

Mikoto cut off the electric flow that was around her body. In a hospital, even electronic devices like cell phones were forbidden.

“Damn it.”

Misaka Mikoto, who was forced to seal her trump card, cursed and said,

“Never mind, I’ll settle everything with you slowly after Daihaseisai. Have you seen the final results of today? Tokiwadai Middle School has comfortably surpassed your school, and is in the lead. Don’t tell me you forgotten that the loser has to accept the winner’s demands?”

“How…however, even if you mention about the penalty game now…wait a second, Index, let go of me now! LET GO! LET GO! IT HURTS!!”

Kamijou swung his hands around, finally pulling away the nun who was still biting him.

After that, he again stared at Mikoto’s face.

“As…as you can see, I got involved in some situation, and am now covered with wounds. Even if I wanted to, I can't participate fully in Daihaseisai now. In this situation, how are you going to decide the winner?”

“…Let’s see.”

Mikoto folded her arms, and seeing Kamijou’s almost teary expression, gently sighed. Her anger ceased as her eyebrows, which had been raised in anger, relaxed slightly. At the same time she relaxed her shoulders, she revealed a slight smile. Just as Kamijou saw this and was silently grinning,

“How about you work hard and continue on?”

“JUST THIS!? I’VE ALREADY SAID THAT IT’S IMPOSSIBLE! THIS KAMIJOU-SAN IS ALMOST 80% DEAD! IF I WORK ANY HARDER, I’LL DIE!! ALSO, FUKIYOSE AND TSUCHIMIKADO, THERE ARE MANY MORE ABSENTEES BESIDES ME!? EVEN IF WE CAN’T JUST FORGET ABOUT THE DEAL, YOU COULD AT LEAST GIVE ME A DISCOUNT… AHHHHHHHHHHH! YOU’RE LEAVING ME JUST LIKE THIS!!??”

The two girls quickly left the room, and Index immediately chomped onto Kamijou’s head again. Seemed like she was really angry now, as the previous one didn’t seem to be enough.

“Touma, what are the people outside Academy City doing?”

“IT HURTS! LET GO OF ME, IT REALLY HURTS!!...Eh? They were contacted by Stiyl, and now all of them are outside looking for them. Tsuchimikado says that most of these organizations just want the extremely important Croce di Pietro instead of being allies with Academy City or the Anglican Church.”

“…So that means that nothing is settled yet.”

“Yes, but,”

Kamijou paused,

“Even though Stiyl was wounded really badly, such that he needed to enter the ICU, he clearly stated that there’s no problem. Wonder what that means?”

14 hours later,

Lidvia Lorenzetti was 8,000 meters above France.

She was in her own private jet.

The black leather seats were lined along the walls, and there was a large central table bolted to the floor. It was a set up for a party. There were decorative lights on the walls, and there was a small chandelier imitation hanging from the ceiling. The interior was made of black wood and a luxury carpet, like a luxury cruise.

Lidvia was alone, sitting next to the exit of the deck.

Beside her, there was a Cross that was wrapped in white cloth.

Compared to the large passenger jets used at an International Airport, it was rather small, and even in Japan, it was considered rare. But for countries that were larger than Japan by several times, such as the United States and Russia, air travel was quintessential for long distance travel. Like for Russia, just moving through the whole of Russia by train would take 2 weeks.

Of course, Lidvia’s base of operations was in Europe. Because she had to move through the European Union, she had to use the power of the plane.

She hated the technology that was used in religion today, but on the other hand, she had to accept the science that they had to use. For example, when there was no printing, preparing a Bible alone required a lot of time and effort. It was impossible to ignore the use of science in the development of the Church and all the religious paintings. To religious leaders, this was a dispute that arose from the Renaissance. And with the technology after that, the development of trains and planes, allowing women and children with low physical ability to safely go for their pilgrimage. And with internet becoming commonplace, it increased the possibility of them evangelizing to those who did not know about Christ.

This was the problem of using all these, Lidvia sighed,

(Believing in an idol that has no life and is completely physical. It's like the pagans of the evil Roman Empire in the past.)

After this slight motion, she glanced around.

In front of her was the cockpit door. Right now, the door opened. From Lidvia's position, she could see the back of the driver calmly operating the dashboard controls.

Which side does he believe in? Lidvia wondered.

This personal jet was Oriana's own possession; there was no presence of any Roman Catholics. But the pilot should be a Roman Catholic. Of course, he was probably just a believer to a relatively minor degree, unlike Oriana or Lidvia.

As he continued to operate this lump of iron to fly every day, he would draw a Cross on the runway and pray for a safe journey.

This scene looked unbelievable, but Lidvia wasn't smiling.

A man who used tools, a man who believed in God.

A difference did just occur from now. 2,000 years ago, when the Son of God was alive and evangelizing, people were probably using tools to bake their bread.

More importantly,

(It's not denying all the scientific tools, but one can't over rely on them and forget God's almighty name.)

After thinking about this, she gently sighed.

Right now, Lidvia was not only unable to display God's almighty name, she had to submit to the power of science.

In actual fact, Lidvia was escaping right now. Though she had managed to protect the Croce di Pietro from the enemy, even if she wanted to use the same attack over and over again, all the 'Belvederes' where she could use the Croce di

Pietro were secured. The Croce di Pietro couldn't work if it was not exposed to the night sky. But if the opponent built a simple structure above these 'Belvederes', she couldn't use the Croce di Pietro around Academy City. And in this highly difficult scenario, the important fighting 'sinner' Oriana Thomson had been captured by the enemy.

"Hohoho."

However, she still continued to laugh.

"How pitiful…ahh, how pitiful, Oriana Thomson. Ho, hoho. I have to save her. I have to personally save that lost 'sinner' who was arrested…"

Lidvia Lorenzetti normally used the misfortunes and disadvantageous situations as her motivation to continue.

"To barge into Academy City, to fight with 2.3 million people, to safely save Oriana, and to peacefully end all these."

What was she saying? Was it a suicidal wish?

Before the plan could be put to work, she would have to return to the Vatican. Lidvia would definitely be reprimanded for the failure of her reckless action. Before she could even request help to save Oriana, her own life was at peril.

However,

The more difficult the task in front of her,

The higher she would aim.

As long as she thought about breaking through all these, Lidvia Lorenzetti would feel an incomparable amount of delight. It was like a sportsman meeting his career rival.

"Mardi Gras."

The words came from the popular Christian holiday before Quadragesima[3] It was almost similar to the 'Carnival' celebrated in New Orleans, USA, and the Fastnacht in Germany.

The reason why Lidvia was called this was—

“Ho, hoho. Hahaha!! I’ll move on. No matter whether it’s fortune or misfortune, no matter whether it’s a smooth ride or a stormy one, I’ll take them on! I’ll fulfill the meaning of the word ‘Carnival’ and eat up all this reality that’s going to be spiritual food for me!”

No matter whether it was a candy or a whip that she received, she would give the same response.

In other words, there was basically no one who could stop her from doing anything. A person who would be delighted no matter what she was given, a person who would continue to smile and proceed on. If something prevented her from advancing, it would only cause Lidvia to move forward, as preventing her would be suicide in the first place.

“First, we’ll settle the stuff inside the Roman Catholic Church. Then, I’ll have to propose a battle plan to save Oriana, and finally, attack Academy City! Wahaha, what a large obstacle! And is it ever so sweet!”

She knew that the pilot in the cockpit would be terrified by her eccentricity. However, Lidvia could even use this sort of suspicion as motivation.

At this moment,

“A-Ah. Attention please?”

A female’s voice suddenly rang.

Lidvia’s shoulders jerked. There was no attendant in this personal plane. There was also a sound of panic from the cockpit. Seemed like the pilot didn’t know anything.

But Lidvia knew.

That female’s voice—

“I’m the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Laura Stuart. Don’t say that I didn’t introduce myself, yes? Lidvia-san.” She sounded rather happy.

A female who had a much more important title than the ‘Mardi Gras’, such that in modern Church society, she was an indispensable figure. According to rumors, this monster had authority that equaled or even exceeded the queen of England.

Lidvia gasped, this having the double meaning of joy and terror.

A powerful enemy, and to her, a lamb that had inexplicable charm.

“…Why, this personal jet…?”

“Hoho. You seemed to have changed your name, huh. To take flight not from Italy, but from France. But do you think that such a little trick can fool me? I ordered the staff of Haneda Airport to stick a little present on the wall of the plane when you stopped.”

“…”

There seemed to be some sort of spiritual item stuck on the outside of the plane’s body.

Even so, it was impossible to pull it out from here. It couldn’t possibly stick onto the plane’s body as it moved at ultrasonic speed. Basically, there would be a difference in pressure the moment the door was opened.

But, did the Anglicans really find this plane on their own?

If so, when she first brought the Croce di Pietro onto this Japanese flight, there should have been something. Since nothing happened, it meant that the flight was secured after they took off from Japan.

If so, the only thing she could think of was,

(Is it with the help of Academy City…)

No matter what, the situation now was bleak for her.

The signal spiritual item attached onto the plane would mean that the location of this plane was leaked to England. Even if she changed the landing area, the enemy could easily catch Lidvia at the airport.

Even so,

“Ho.”

“You’re so weird. To laugh even louder when you’re being pressured. Don’t tell me that it can’t be corrected?”

“It’s like swimming and diving. The further the distance, the larger the pain, but the bigger the delight on reaching the goal.”

“You really like to find pleasure in pain and torture. No, it’s more like enjoying getting difficult people to succumb to you, that’s sadism. To get this sweet delight, I presume you’re going to attack Academy City again?”

“__”

Facing Laura’s irritating voice, Lidvia remained silent for a while.

“Academy City still owes me something.”

“Who said that when someone punched you on the right side of your face, that you’ll extend out your left side as well? Oriana Thomson was deported to London. Even if you are to go back to the Vatican to regroup and plan, your beloved Oriana is no longer in Academy City.”

“No, suppressing Academy City, and then demanding for Oriana, that’s meaningful. Taking over that land will result in the Roman Catholic Church’s victory. Once we achieve this, the Anglican Church would be vanquished on a single command."

On her face, was a smile.

One full of darkness, fanatics, aggressiveness like a beast, a smile unlike one expected of a nun.

“I won’t forgive them. If Academy City didn’t resist like that, everyone would have been happy. Those magicians, and the boy assisting them. If not for them, I would be taking this plane with Oriana!”

This fanatic cry got even more sonorous.

As she declared loudly that she wouldn’t forgive, that competitiveness got even more intense.

“SO I WON’T FORGIVE THEM. BUT I’M HAPPY, TO MEET A LARGER ‘OBSTACLE’, THE DELIGHT OF OVERCOMING THE DIFFICULTY WILL BE EVEN GREATER! THIS SO CALLED OVERCOMING, IS TO CRUSH ON OBSTACLES LIKE THIS!!”

Tears were dripping from her eyes.

Those wild eyes of hers that were so feisty forgot to blink.

“TO NOT ATTACK ENGLAND DIRECTLY, BUT TO DELIBERATELY TAKE THE LONG ROUTE AND ATTACK ACADEMY CITY, AND THEN TO SAVE ORIANA, SUCH DIFFICULTY SUITS ME!! I MUST THANK GOD FOR GIVING ME SUCH A WONDERFUL MEAL! THE THICKER THE MEAT, THE CHEWIER IT IS!! I’LL LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU THE NEXT TIME!! AHHAHAHAHA!!”

Lidvia, who had been speaking for several minutes, was showing a ferocious expression that could bite even a thick metal plate. Hearing such a voice that was definitely unstable, Laura’s response was—

“Ho…hoho.”

“…? To me, that’s something to laugh about, but I don’t understand what you find funny about it.”

“What? The reason is simple. Seeing that the obstacle ahead is even greater, the larger the difficulty, the moment when one breaks through these difficulties must be delightful, right?”

After the spiritual item remained significantly silent,

“Such words may have some sense, you trapped mouse.”

What?

Just as Lidvia was trying to understand the meaning of this sentence.

BAM!!

A loud sound could be heard.

The sound came from the side.

She frantically turned around.

A rectangle was cut around the entrance of the personal jet. With an orange glow, the metal melted due to heat.

(This…Archbishop…she…actually set up a spiritual item on the door…!?)

Even though she realized it, it was too late.

The deck, which had been cut apart, was being blown apart by the stormy winds of the night sky. At the same time, like a balloon being released, because of air pressure, the air inside the plane was blown out. Instead of calling it the wind, it was more like a detonation pressure moving through the plane. The sofas and table, which had been bolted to the floor, were mercilessly pulled out, flying in the 8,000 meters high sky.

“!!”

Lidvia frantically used all her five fingers to grab onto the edge of the wall, but she couldn’t even hold on for 2 seconds. Like dust being blown away, her body left the floor, and she was pulled out of the plane.

“A!”

Just like this, she was unable to even make a sound.

The 8,000 meters high sky further emphasized the darkness of the night. There were no clouds in the sky, just a bright moon and numerous stars around it. As the clouds were underneath, there was nothing that could conceal these celestial bodies.

(Eh, ack, ah…!! Breathe—!!)

No matter how one tried to breathe, in high altitude, one couldn't feel that he was breathing in oxygen, just an icy feeling that was burning the chest. As the altitude was too high, Lidvia didn't feel that she was falling. Rather, her body was under the wrong impression that she was being pushed up by a great pressure.

Beside Lidvia, who was stunned and terrified, something was flying alongside her.

In front of her, falling at the same speed, was a card. Like a thin plastic material, with black marker writing on it, no history, no style, like a spiritual item meant to fool a child. However, the magic array on it was so intricate, it was even more sophisticated than a carefully woven Persian carpet.

"Haha! Lidvia, it's a pity that your ability is merely to this extent. If you're willing to give up on the Vatican and follow me, I'll save you without any harm done to you."

If she was saying this now, Laura must have prepared a backup plan. She may have prepared a group of Anglicans below, ready to catch Lidvia and retreat at a moment's notice.

But Lidvia rejected it.

"What…are…you saying? Don't be ridiculous!!"

"Really? Then fall with 'that thing' and make a wide hole in the ground!"

At this moment Lidvia saw it.

The figure of the personal jet floating above her was becoming even smaller. It was the only thing that could correct her sense of distance in this wild world.

The door of the personal jet opened, and a Cross-shaped item wrapped in white cloth flew out.

The Croce di Pietro.

Though the magical power of that spiritual item was very high, its durability wasn't much different from an antique. To fall from an altitude of 8,000 meters, even if it hit the surface of the ocean, it would be smashed.

"…!! I won't allow you to do that!!"

Lidvia breathed in some oxygen and said this.

She opened her arms wide and muttered a spell which caused her to descend like a feather. This was originally a defensive spell that could slow down anything. Using it under gravity, the effect would be like a parachute.

"Calculating the descending trajectory of the Croce di Pietro, I should be able to make it. No, I have to make it! Time is short, which makes it all the more interesting!!"

Lidvia sounded even more aggressive and competitive as she got ready to receive the falling Cross.

"The plane is about 400 metres from you. At this stage, for you to lower your speed now, even if you can catch this giant slab of marble and fall freely, do you intend to be ground up, Lidvia?"

"It's because of this situation, I'm saying that it's interesting, Archbishop!! Indeed, even with my spells, even if I use my maximum power, it's impossible to catch the Croce di Pietro. However, this is why! Facing this sort of emergency situation, to be able to accept and enjoy this trial! MWAHAHAHA!!"

Even in this perilous situation, the 'Mardi Gras' could open her arms wide, laugh, and accept this.

The card stopping beside Lidvia let out a chuckle.

"To use this spell alone, just you and the huge marble Cross should be the limit for you."

“So…what…?”

“Then, what are you going to do with that?”

Hearing the voice, Lidvia looked up.

At that moment,

From the opening made on the personal jet, another human figure flew out.

It was the pilot.

He swung his limbs around frantically, and it didn’t look like he had prepared a parachute. To be forced to fly at an altitude of 8,000 meters without any preparations, it was amazing that he was still conscious. However, he did look a bit too frantic.

The moonlight was shining on the pilot.

As if he was being rubbed around by air, descending in a chaotic orbit, tears and fright appeared on his face due to this sudden situation.

That's right.

Like those people that Lidvia had met up till now, the ‘sinners’ that were forsaken by society and the world.

“!!”

“Lidvia, now that you’re at your limit, which do you choose? The biggest spiritual item in the world, or a poor lost lamb? Hoho, if you’re willing to kneel down and apologise, I will immediately provide aid, no?”

“You…! This is a trap that you set up, and yet you dare to say this!!”

“No time for chit-chat, you know. Look, the first one is dropping.”

“Ugh!!”

The Cross, wrapped in white cloth, mercilessly fell beside Lidvia. A 150cm long, 70cm wide, 10cm thick marble slab; the power of it falling from 400 meters

above ground would be enough to destroy a ship.

(Putting a defensive barrier in front, the thickness should be enough to withstand this. If I purposely break the thick wall and slow down—)

After that, the huge slab of stone fell beside Lidvia.

The defensive wall, which was originally very thick, broke because of this impact. The speed was lowered by a significant extent, but it still hit Lidvia directly on the chest.

“Ugh…eh! WOOAAHHHHHHHHH!!”

Blood oozed out from between her teeth, but Lidvia still used both hands to grab onto the heavy Cross. All her fingers were grabbing tightly onto the white cloth of the Croce di Pietro.

“Look, the second one is coming.”

A really cheerful voice came from the card.

Lidvia was losing her consciousness due to pain, loss of blood and lack of oxygen, but she still forced herself to look up.

The pilot of the personal jet was also falling towards Lidvia. To Lidvia, who was covered in wounds, it was like a catapult shot used to destroy a wall.

(I…won’t…be able to…receive…)

She held tightly onto the Cross.

(Too much…everyone will…fall…together…must protect the spiritual item, then I have to give up on the pilot…but…if I give up on this, I can save a life…)

Lidvia saw it.

She was nearing the pilot, that face which was dirtied by tears and snot due to the unreasonable violence.

“Oh, Lidvia. You declared before that you’ll save the sinners, then you should be able to save those innocent victims, right?”

“You dare…”

Even if she wanted to say it, she was unable to squeeze out the voice in her heart.

She couldn’t catch everything.

If she did that, everyone would fall.

She could only discard things that could be discarded.

However,

The situation was now extremely difficult.

(No…now, think…if this continues…everyone will die…but…however…ugh, got to endure this! This…sweet feeling? If I don’t give up…!!)

The more she thought, the competitiveness in Lidvia becomes even wilder. Her sweat wasn’t of pain or nervousness, it had something even ferocious.

Besides Lidvia, who was gritting her teeth, trying to endure this, a voice came from beside.

A slippery one.

As if a wonderful spring was poured onto bewitchingly dry land.

Like the irresistible temptation of the devil.

“What, Lidvia, I thought that you’re going to catch both of them? When the obstacle ahead is even higher…after crossing all these, to trample me, who created these difficulties, won’t you feel even more delighted?”

Pacha.

Something broke inside Lidvia’s body.

(Tram…ple…?)

Due to loss of blood, her consciousness was wavering. Thus, she could only

think of this.

(I…want…to…smash…that snobbish…Archbishop's…arrogance…)

This extremely ferocious feeling could only be gotten after achieving 'that'.

However, she didn't realize that this was also Laura's trap.

"Ha…haha."

She opened her mouth wide, as the saliva, mixed with blood, flowed out of it. The pilot, who was supposed to be caught by her, gave an even louder scream on seeing her face. Lidvia's face was full of an astonishing amount of competitiveness and aggression. She grabbed onto the Cross and opened her hands wide.

As if she welcoming back a lover.

She seemed to be saying that the impact, which would strike anytime soon, no matter how painful it was, would delight her.

"HAHAHA! AHAHAHAHMWAHAHAHAHA!!"

With blood, sweat, saliva and snot, Lidvia Lorenzetti revealed a large smile.

After that,

The pilot's body slammed hard into hers. Due to the large impact, an unspeakable feeling passed through Lidvia's body.

The Windowless Building in Academy City.

This construct was made of a unique material that could absorb and diffuse the heat and shockwaves caused by a nuclear explosion. It was Academy City's strongest fortress.

As there were no stairs, elevators, or even ventilation, in this place that one could only access with the help of a teleporter, a 'human' was silently positioned in the middle.

The board chairman of Academy City.

The ‘human’, Aleister Crowley.

“Hn.”

He was in the dark room, which was rather large, and somewhat chilly. There was a large glass cylinder in the middle, and in it, there was red liquid. The glass cylinder was attached with numerous cables and wires of different sizes that covered the floor. They were attached to a rectangular apparatus on the wall. In this room that wasn’t illuminated, the green and red lights on the dashboard looked like shining stars in the night.

He was floating upside down in the cylinder.

The green surgical clothes swayed silently in the fluid, the decolorized silver hair entangling it.

This person, it was unknown if he was a man or a woman, an adult or a child, a Saint or a convict. Anyway, only the word ‘human’ could describe him.

“To use the Croce di Pietro to take over Academy City and ensure the welfare of the world?”

He muttered to himself.

No matter what Oriana and Lidvia’s personal motives were, or what they could do, they wouldn’t be able to do this without the help of the Roman Catholic Church. More accurately, Oriana and Lidvia had caught on to the proposed plan by the Roman Catholic Church and got to work, intending to do this for their own benefit. Such a guess was somewhat more logical.

The mastermind controlling Oriana Thomson and Lidvia Lorenzetti.

The Roman Catholic Church.

“…This situation got really big.”

Aleister said in a tone that indicated that he couldn’t stand this threat anymore.

In the past, the Roman Catholic Church would carry out such insidious acts, from as far back as when Galileo had been alive. While the base of the world had been controlled by Christianity in the past, it was now unavoidably and gradually shifting towards the science side. The control of the world was slowly, but surely, shaking.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the exterior, was the self-proclaimed world's largest religion, but there was a problem.

Right now, the magical world could be divided into three main pillars: Rome, Russia and England. Among them, the largest sect was the Roman Catholic Church, which had 2 billion believers; this was one way of saying it…but on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church had gathered 2 billion people, but they could only match England, which had a population of 90 million. Also, not all of England's citizens belonged to the Anglican Church.

If in the future, the Anglican Church looked up and gathered another 1 or 2 billion believers, what would happen to the Roman Catholic Church?

They had been declaring that they had 2 billion believers, but in reality, they didn't have that many believers. Because of this reason, one had to make reservations about this problem. Also, there had been some recent entries that one had to take note of.

First, the destruction of the main fighting strength of the Roman Catholic Church, the Gregorian Chant and the Agnese Forces.

Second, new forces, including Orsola Aquinas and the Amakusa Church joining the Anglican Church.

Because of these scenarios, the balance of the magical world, which was maintained with much difficulty, was greatly shaken. The Roman Catholic Church, who were insistent on being the world's number one, would be cautious against such instability.

The action this time was likely due to such a background.

Right now, what would the expressions of the governing Roman Catholic pope and Cardinals be?

As one who once abandoned magic, Aleister was now the leader of the Science world which managed everything. He was now looking at this scenario with contempt.

“But…”

He whispered in an uninterested tone.

Because they were ugly people who were struggling, there was no point in seeing them struggle. But this time, to use a spiritual item on the level of the Croce di Pietro, it was hard to imagine the attack of the Roman Catholic Church ending like this. After this, there may be more spiritual items of that level. Though the matter of the Croce di Pietro had been settled by a certain boy, to be honest, it hadn’t been handled well. It was hard to guarantee that the same method would work next time.

(If so, I have to bring forward our plan. Really, this isn’t a simple plan to be used for these trivial matters.)

As Aleister thought, a rectangular display appeared on the screen.

It was a detailed world map, and there were 9,969 indicated red lights. It was the locations where the certain mass-produced espers were distributed to. He intended to use these and the slumbering Imaginary Number Districts in Academy City to carry out a plan that would stop magical activity on a global scale.

However,

(The important Imagine Breaker’s development is still unstable. Can I really use this?)

Aleister thought, this was supposed to be a plan that was not meant to be pushed forward.

Can’t be helped.

(If so…)

With this voice in his heart, a new display overlapped the map which showed

where the espers were being developed.

What appeared on the rectangular screen was a rectangular glass box.

A bent silver rod was floating in it.

(I may have to consider the possibility that I have to take action personally. Ho… hoho.)

In the darkness, the ‘human’ laughed.

Was that from the greatest scientist in the world?

Or was that from the strongest magician in the world?

Was he a man, or a woman?

An adult, or a child?

A Saint, or a convict?

What that person was thinking, nobody knew.

He just revealed a smile.

In the morning, Himegami Aisa woke up on the hospital bed.

The room that she was in wasn’t a private single room like Kamijou, but rather an ordinary 6 person ward that was separated by curtains for personal space. Of course, all the patients living in this room were all females, but of different ages. There was also a girl of similar age to Himegami.

“…”

Himegami’s lax expression shifted to the ceiling before she slowly moved her upper body up to sit on the bed.

“What are you doing here so early in the morning?”

The plain voice was directed at the edge of the hospital bed. The nun wearing pure white robes was sitting on the floor, her upper body leaning on the railing, as she continued to sleep on the edge of the hospital bed.

Himegami, who had just woken up, looked like she wanted to sleep, but this nun also looked like she wanted to sleep as well. The person living with her (or rather, the homeowner) would often be sent to this hospital because of injuries. This white nun seemed used to sleeping overnight at a hospital. The way she slept on the couch in an individual ward or the bench in the waiting room was famous among the nurses. Right now, the rumor had developed such that the mysterious girl who lurked around in the hospital liked television, snacks and toys.

The British nun, Index, woke up, her eyes narrowed.

“Ho…because the hospital staff mentioned that I can’t use the bench during daytime, I came over to Aisa to seek refuge. Such a comfortable bed…”

Her animal instincts seemed to have led her to desire for a warm and comfortable bed.

However,

“Oi oi, a quilt is meant to cover, not for biting. Also, don’t drool whenever you want it, I’ll be the one scolded.”

“How warm…”

Index didn’t seem to care as she pressed her face against the quilt. As her face was placed near Himegami’s thigh, there was an itchy feeling. This girl seemed to be in an afternoon lesson in spring, as 70-80% of her consciousness was still in dreamland. After thinking for a while, Himegami opened a 1-meter tall mini ice box that was beside the bed.

“I’ll use the ice from the freezer to wake you up, heh.”

“SO COLD!!!!???”

After the rectangular ice block touched the nun’s forehead, the nun inadvertently screamed. Not only her, everyone else in the room woke up. Himegami backed

away, lowered her head and apologized. As if she couldn’t stand everyone staring at her, she pressed on the remote and closed the curtain separating them.

Index caught the ice block that she had knocked away from her forehead. Without noticing Himegami’s expression, she placed the ice block into her mouth.

“Aisa’s all right, right? I heard that our magician used some sloppy healing spell to heal you.”

“Actually, I had already lost consciousness when they were healing me. But the frog-faced doctor said that all the tests results are okay, I should be able to recover fully.”

Himegami said this as she adjusted the collar of her pajamas. The Cross was shining. Her body, covered by this cloth, was wrapped in bandages in a certain manner over her chest and lower abdomen, but all the blood vessels that were used to maintain her life seemed to have recovered.

To a girl, Himegami Aisa would also worry that scars would be left on her body. Regarding this, the frog-faced doctor revealed a weird smile, saying, “Hoho, who do you think I am? As long as it’s something a patient requires, I will provide everything for them. Hohohohoho, I love to be relied on by patients.” Come to think of it, when the right arm of a certain boy had been cut, there hadn't been any scar left behind.

Himegami stared at the bandages inside her pajamas.

(It’s supposed to be a wound so deep that the bones can be seen.)

Though that red-haired priest had just done an emergency ‘life maintenance’, it was a magic spell that could restore wounds that were thought to be too deep. Before this, there had been something that she wanted to abandon in despair, and now it was pricking Himegami’s heart like thorns.

But,

But there was something more important than them.

“The frog-face doctor said that I can be discharged either today or tomorrow.

However, with this body, I probably won’t be able to take part in the matches.”

“??? Aisa, why do you look somewhat lonely?”

Index looked at her in an unbelievable manner.

Himegami wordlessly shook her head, however, just like this, the thoughts in her head wouldn’t dispel.

Thus, she said the thing that she originally intended to keep silent about,

“That guy, did he do something reckless again?”

“Hn, that’s right!”

Index said in a clear and cheery tone,

“I haven’t asked about the details, but it seems like Roman Catholic magicians took advantage of the Daihaseisai to attack. And this time, Touma didn’t bother discussing things with me before running head on into battle and telling me afterwards.”

As she said this, Index seemed to be angry as she started to bite on the edge of the quilt.

But Himegami didn’t seem to notice.

Or rather, she had no time to take that into account.

(Because the magicians from the Roman Catholic Church were here.)

In the end, a certain boy clenched his fist, and went to battle for this reason.

This was an obvious thing. For Kamijou to be with a real magician and arrive beside an injured Himegami, it was likely that they had been battling before she fell. For Himegami Aisa to fall, the boy would rage on seeing her like this. This was like making a detour midway through as they were trying to complete their ‘biggest objective’.

(—)

At first, when she became a prisoner of the alchemist, she wondered, why did the boy work so hard to help her? Himegami again wondered. In fact, there was nothing between Kamijou Touma and Himegami Aisa that required Kamijou to work so hard.

(It doesn't matter no matter who the person is, huh.)

The person that the boy saved wasn't Himegami Aisa.

As long as the person was present, he would save the person no matter who the person was.

Even if Himegami Aisa wasn't present.

In his consciousness, she didn't exist.

The other party was saved by him. Such an action, especially to Kamijou Touma, wasn't really special. Because to him, that was a daily action. Just looking at these weeks alone, about every 1 or 2 weeks, he would swing his fist and change another person's life.

(I…)

Himegami remained in a sitting posture on the hospital bed as she pondered.

She was not like the girl in front of her who was biting on a quilt, who had power and knowledge that others would find worth in saving. And it was not like she had someone who she could safely rely on the moment the person was beside her, a person who she could interact with without anything between them.

(I, really…)

Himegami slightly lowered her head, her hands lightly grabbing onto the quilt above her knees.

She couldn't think of any reason for her to be with that boy.

When Himegami Aisa was in trouble, Kamijou Touma would help out no matter when it was. But, if Kamijou and Himegami had no reason to be together, such actions would be meaningless. In other words, even if he did anything for

Himegami, Kamijou was just helping others pay the bill meaninglessly. In most situations, what he paid with would often be his wounds.

(Actually…I really shouldn't let him…save me.)

Such a chilly thought appeared in her mind.

Like right now, Himegami herself didn’t have any special ability or talent that was worthy for others to risk their lives to save her. The power in her body would only cause people to be injured or quarrel. This repulsive ability formed her character. In studies or sports, or anything other than ability, there was nothing that she could beat others in.

This sounded really stupid.

(Why?)

Why must she be saved?

(Why save me?)

Was there a problem? There should be a mistake.

(He already…already promised me.)

And yet he hadn’t fulfilled the promise. He had said that he would visit her before the Night Parade.

(If so, my values…)

If such a gentle sentence could pressure that person named Kamijou Touma.

(What’s my reason for existing here?)

“…I seem to be…everyone’s baggage.”

She said such cold words, which echoed in her chest.

In contrast, the girl biting onto the quilt suddenly stopped.

Besides having power and knowledge that others would risk their lives to save,

she had a warm heart that others would find happiness in while being with her.

The nun said,

“Not so, Touma and Aisa seem to be happy together.”

Eh?

At this moment, Himegami Aisa was unable to understand the meaning of this sentence.

But, that pure white nun, who had already been protected by others, slammed her cheeks and continued to bite on the quilt.

“Because Touma has been swinging his right fist too much, some part of the skin on his fist was cut.”

She angrily explained to Himegami.

“Basically, for Touma to go to this extent when he hates inconvenience, this should be the reason. Regarding rules and regulations, or for the sake of the world, Touma won’t be serious about it. If it’s anything that he finds irritating… like running away when he’s fighting against many people, he won’t even make a tofu hamburger for me to eat, and completely ignore my lecturing.”

But, Index continued on,

“Touma will always follow what he decides on. Whether it’s becoming enemies with several hundred nuns, or whether it’s heading to the cage of an alchemist who’s controlling several thousand people, he would not back down. Touma has already decided on protecting Himegami. Thus, speaking of the Roman Catholic magicians, or the chaos in Academy City, the most important thing was that Himegami got involved with such unimportant things, he couldn’t forgive them.”

Himegami Aisa heard these words.

She just remained silent as she heard them.

“Because Touma has already protected so many people, he couldn’t understand

this clearly. But his feeling of wanting to protect Aisa won't decrease. He definitely won't think that Aisa is troublesome. If he was like that, there wouldn't be so many people gathering around Touma. Since Touma won't mention this, no one will talk about this, the shackled chains won't be obvious. But if one knows about all the shackles, the chains formed will be even further and meaningful."

After Index finished speaking, an air of silence hung around them.

Himegami wanted to say something, but she realized that she couldn't make a voice. Her lower jaw and lips were trembling slightly.

She pondered on what was the feeling that caused this trembling.

"Say, Fukiyose-san, what's with you, coming all the way to a patient's room and giving him a slap! If you're so energetic, shouldn't there be no need for you to remain in the hospital!?"

"YOU…YOU SHUT UP!! ANYONE WOULD BE SHOCKED AND TERRIFIED ON SEEING A BOY'S NAKED BODY ALL OF A SUDDEN!!"

"But aren't you the one who suddenly barged into my room when I was changing?"

"KAMIJOU TOUMA! PREPARE YOURSELF! ARE YOU STILL SLEEPY? THEN, TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN ACTIVITY, YOU NEED RED TEA WITH LOTS AND LOTS OF TANNIC ACID, THERE'S LOADS OF IT INSIDE, SO DRINK UP!!"

"HOT!! HOT!! YOU…YOU IDIOT! IS THERE A NEED TO HIDE YOUR EMBARRASSMENT BY DUNKING HOT TEA INTO SOMEONE'S THROAT!!"

A ruckus came from the corridor.

Accompanied by frantic footsteps that weren't suitable for a quiet morning hospital room.

"Himegami's room should be here, but isn't it too inconvenient to come over so suddenly?"

“Eh? Himegami may not say much, but it doesn’t mean that she likes to be silent. Just observe, her lips will curl up slightly when she’s happy. I thought that Fukiyose-san would know about this, since she likes to take care of others silently.”

“Likes to take care of others?…Who are you talking about?”

“Eh. I’m talking about you. You didn’t know where Himegami’s room is, yet you came over to find me, and you spent 30 minutes fussing about what fruits to buy at the fruit shop, so you should be someone who likes to think about your friends…HOT!? I SAID THAT YOU CAN’T STUFF DOWN RED TEA LIKE THAT! FORGET ABOUT HOW ACTIVE MY MIND IS, JUST HURRY UP AND GET HIMEGAMI TO OUR CLASSMATES! I even borrowed a wheelchair here.”

“Today’s first match is the extremely draining inter-school male cavalry match. Group A battle. Why can’t I arrange for the injured to go over and cheer for them!?”

Index stopped biting onto the quilt and looked in the direction where the sound came from. All she saw was a curtain separating them. Himegami also looked in the direction where Index was looking, still grabbing onto a remote control that could open and close the curtains.

“You…do you know what that guy, why does he continue to fight even with all those injuries?”

“About that, I don’t know either.”

Index replied without any hesitation.

“I asked him before, and he said that he’s doing it for himself. Maybe to Touma, that’s happiness?”

Himegami pressed the button on the remote control.

The curtains opened.

In front of Himegami Aisa, was the world that she was looking forward to.

# Afterword

To the readers who continued to buy the books ever since the first volume was released, it's been quite a while.

To the studious readers who read ten volumes in one go, nice to meet you.

I'm Kamachi Kazuma.

It's finally the tenth volume now, but the time now is still September. Remembering that the first volume was at the end of July, the time that has passed in the novel is really slow. Also, for those who have finished reading this volume, this is the volume where time moves the slowest. Of course, it's slightly faster compared to the earlier ninth volume.

The magic theme this time isn't really any different from the ninth volume, it's just further elaboration on the 'constellation'. Spells that use 'constellation'-it's basically astrology, with the development of astronomy on the science side, the basic rules of this area of knowledge would be changed, and would cause new differences. And as Ptolemaism and Copernican theory change, the common knowledge about 'stars' would be overturned, which means the changes would be really big.

Considering the dynamics of this series, which revolves around the conflict between science and magic, I guess I can't ignore this, so I stealthily slipped this in.

As the times are different, whether Uranus and Pluto exist would largely affect the divination rules and results. Such a situation should be similar to quantum theory.

To Haimura-san, who is in charge of illustrations, and Miki-san, who's in charge of printing, I'm sorry for troubling you two all the time. Please continue to support me in the future.

At the same time, I would like to thank all the readers. I'll continue to write on. Please continue to give me feedback and support.

And now, this volume ends here.

I hope you'll continue to read the next volume.

At this moment, let me sign off first.

...Come to think of it, it's October now, isn't it time for winter clothing?

-Kamachi Kazuma-

# Notes

1. ↑ Lidvia occasionally refers to the observatories for the Croce di Pietro as Belvederes. This is most likely the formal name for the obervatories.
2. ↑ I'm tucking in
3. ↑ French for ‘Fat Tuesday’. During the Christian’s fasting festival, also known as Quadragesima, which is the first Sunday in Lent, as the people cannot eat any meat during the 40 days, people will eat loads and loads of fatty food during the three days before the fast to store their energy.

**Toaru Majutsu no Index — Volume 10**

Author: **Kamachi Kazuma**

Illustrator: **Haimura Kiyotaka**

Translated by **Teh Ping**